Corporate Watch

issue 47 - 48 | winter 2010 - 2011 | £ 3.00

the cost of free papers.

corporate watch.

corporate-critical research since 1996

Contents:

Credits:
Hannah Schling, Shiar Youssef, Tom Anderson, David Cromwell, David Edwards, Jonathan Cook, Michael Barker.
Illustrations: Jon Sack
Layout: Jean Paldan (www.rareformnewmedia.com)

Corporate Watch is an independent, non-profit research and publishing group based in London. It aims to expose how large corporations function, and the detrimental effects they have on society and the environment as an inevitable result of their current legal structure. Corporate Watch strives for a society that is ecologically sustainable, democratic, equitable and non-exploitative. Progress towards such a society may, in part, be achieved through dismantling the vast economic and political power of corporations, and developing ecologically and socially just alternatives to the present economic system. If you would like to help with research, fund-raising or distribution, please contact us.

Disclaimer: The objectivity of the media is, at best, an illusion and, at worst, a veil to disguise inherent biases. Corporate Watch freely acknowledges that it comes from an anti-corporate perspective. We do attempt, however, to be factual, accurate, honest and truthful in all our output. Any comments or corrections are always welcome.

ISSN 14705842

www.corporatewatch.org
news(at)corporatewatch.org
Tel: 020 7426 0005

Corporate Watch is a member the Independent News Collective (INK), the trade association of the UK alternative press. www.ink.uk.com

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper by Footprint (www.footprinters.co.uk)

contribute to corporate watch.

The Corporate Watch Magazine is a quarterly publication providing in-depth analysis and information on a wide range of topical issues of interest to those concerned about social and environmental justice. The next issue will focus on the 'rules of engagement' with corporations. If you're a campaigner or a member of the public who's had an interesting encounter with a company, whether fruitful or futile, and you think it could be a good case study, or if you would like to contribute analysis on how effective or ineffective engaging with companies might be, or how this is used by corporates to avoid regulation and so on, we would love to hear from you. Please send submissions to contact(at)corporatewatch.org.

subscribe to the corporate watch newsletter.

4 issues produced quarterly; Individuals/not-for-profits UK £12 Elsewhere £16.
Profit making organisations £30, multinational corporations £5000 (or 1 minutes profit).

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Phone:
Email:
Date:
I would like to pay Corporate Watch a subscription of:
(circle one) £12 £16 £30 £5000

I enclose a cheque to Corporate Watch for £_____
Date:
Please complete the form and send it along with any relevant payment to Corporate Watch, c/o Freedom Press Angel Alley 84b Whitechapel High Street London, E1 7QX

I would like to pay Corporate Watch a donation by standing order of £_____.
Name of Bank:
Account Number:
Sort Code
Address of Bank:
Postcode:
I would like my standing order to start on date (dd/mm/yyyy):

Signature:_____

Bank instructions: Please pay the above amount on the 1st of the month to Corporate Watch, account number 50108062 sort code 08 92 50. The Co-operative Bank, 13 New Street, Oxford OX1 1LG / 'You would need to take this form to your bank yourself

editorial.

So the Corporate Watch *Newsletter* is late again! But we're back, having transformed the *Newsletter* into a quarterly *Magazine*. The main reason for this, as indicated in the reader survey in the last issue, is to make space for more in-depth analysis of the themes dealt with in each issue. This double issue on so-called free newspapers will hopefully demonstrate this is a change for the better.

Over the last two years, Corporate Watch has been contacted by various people asking whether we, or anyone else, had done any work on the *Metro*, the London 'free paper war' and suchlike. The lack of critical analysis was surprising, given that the phenomenon of 'free' papers has existed for a few years now. Indeed, one caller expressed her shock saying, "I am very surprised that you haven't done anything on this given how obviously bad and evil they are."

More than 45 million copies of free papers are read everyday by some 80 million people around the world, but mostly in Europe. Since 1995, when the *Metro* was established in Sweden, over 250 free dailies have been introduced in almost 60 countries. In some countries, they have become the most widely read dailies. But while academics, journalists and newspaper publishers have been busy analysing this 'new' business model and its effects on the press industry, other fundamental questions have been conveniently forgotten about. In an article titled '*Business as usual*', Shiar Youssef argues that claims about the novelty of the free paper model are often exaggerated and that the dichotomy created between free and paid-for papers is a false one. This is partly due to the fact that most free papers are published by the same media giants that also publish paid-for papers. If anything, they are just another way to rejuvenate a flagging industry and generate profits for these same companies. Putting things in a historical perspective, as Hannah Schling does in an article on the history of freesheets and regional papers, should make this clearer.

Profit-driven, cost-cutting policies are, of course, not the only thing wrong with free dailies. Another article in this issue, '*The cost of free*', investigates what else is wrong with them: from limited original content and lack of investigative journalism, through treating readers as mere marketing target groups, to poor labour conditions and environmental pollution.

To complement these, we have included a commentary piece, rare in its honesty, by Jonathan Cook talking about his experience of "intellectual cleansing" whilst working as a journalist for free and paid-for papers in the UK. In another opinion piece, Michael Barker argues that real newspapers should not be free and that the price we pay for cheap or free "propaganda rag sheets" is "our freedom."

It should become clear from these articles, and the rest of material included in this issue, that by criticizing and highlighting the problems with 'free' papers, we are by no means trying to defend or save paid-for tabloids and broadsheets. On the contrary, we argue that free papers are simply an acute manifestation of the fundamental problems inherent in corporate media, namely commercial, profit-driven policies that have turned news into mere packaging and marketing of information in the service of economic and political elites. And that is precisely why we chose MediaLens for this issue's *Campaign Spotlight* slot.

We would have liked to include more contributions on alternative media and grassroots initiatives challenging corporate media's dominance. We have, however, included a fictional discussion between three media activists on the problems facing Indymedia and other grassroots media projects. This issue also showcases some of the best political spoofs that have been produced in the UK over the past decade or so.

Whether it is challenging corporate media and correcting their distorted version of events (MediaLens), or 'hijacking' and subverting them (spoofs), or providing an alternative platform for reporting directly from the streets (Indymedia), the common goal of these initiatives, as well as Corporate Watch's news service, is reclaiming journalism for what it should be: a critical, honest and compassionate reporting on what really matters.

free papers: some history

Free daily newspapers have, in the past decade, been heralded as a wholly new model for the modern newspaper, one which 'challenges' the 'traditional' business model, but which also holds the potential to 'save' an ailing industry beset with falling readership and circulation figures in the age of online news content. [1] However, the history of free papers is longer than that presented by many of the scholars and journalists commenting on their current manifestation, ***Hannah Schling*** *writes.*

The history of free daily newspapers is most notably situated within the sphere of regional and local papers, and is tightly knitted to the wider transformation of the newspaper industry from overt allegiance to a political party into vehicles for profit-making dominated by a handful of large publishers with a more veiled political agenda. This transformation was precipitated and accompanied by dilemmas over the financing of newspapers in the second half of the twentieth century. As the model of wealthy patrons proved increasingly unworkable [2], advertising revenues gradually came to account for an increasing proportion of newspapers' incomes. Newspapers faced the choice between expanding into a mass readership (and therefore competing fiercely with other publications for readers and advertisers) or a 'high-quality' and wealthier readership (therefore often tempering more radical political critiques). [3] The second, it is said, attracts fewer but more lucrative advertising contracts.

The emergence of regional freesheets, often owned by smaller proprietors, in the 1970s presented a challenge to paid-for local daily newspapers, and further catalysed a transition within their management, funding and editorial structures. Journalist Matthew Engel has described the attitude of many of the paid-for papers at the time as one of "joining 'em rather than beating 'em", with publishers transforming regional papers into "cash cows", whilst driving down costs to compete with freesheets for readers and scarce advertising contracts. [4] In 1970, 1.4% of advertising contracts in the regional press were held by free papers. By 1990, this was 35%. It is argued that freesheets helped precipitate the technological transition within newspaper production, which resulted in the Wapping disputes and the crushing of newspaper unions. Between 1977 and the Wapping strikes in 1986, 681 new regional titles appeared, bringing freesheets up to almost 50% of the provincial press. The response from many paid-for papers was to either issue their own freesheets in direct competition, or to buy out the new freesheets. As Kevin Williams puts it, with 'streamlined production' and the utilisation of new technologies, "the free newspapers propelled paid-for dailies and weeklies to change; Eddie Shah's march to Fleet Street began in Warrington and Stockport." [5]

In the 1970s and 1980s, with falling circulation and readership figures and the consequent closure of many regional and local papers, the interaction between free and paid-for papers led to more 'streamlining', or centralisation, of regional paper ownership. Between 1947 and 2002, the top five publishers increased their proportion of regional evening paper circulation by over half. Four major publishers now dominate the market: Northcliffe (a division of the Daily Mail and General Trust), Johnston, Trinity Mirror and Newsquest (a subsidiary of expansionist American publisher Gannett Corporation). With the ability to merge back-office departments and buy paper more cheaply, these large companies also own job, property and motor advertising papers and websites. For example, one of the biggest online employment websites in the UK, fish4jobs.co.uk, is owned by Newsquest; Johnston Press owns jobstoday.co.uk, propertytoday.co.uk, motorstoday.co.uk and so on.

Regional newspapers were once thought of as important, critical components of local democracy, cultivating investigative journalism and providing information and political commentary for a specific community. The dominance of these markets by corporate publishing monopolies has largely eroded this role and left many regional papers 'streamlined' and lacking real editorial and news content. Recent disputes at the Newsquest-owned Brighton and Hove newspaper *The Argus* reflect this reality. Sub-editing, printing and other production processes were relocated to Newsquest offices in Southampton, where they are being merged with the production of Newsquest-owned Southampton paper *The Echo*, resulting in redundancies for Brighton-based journalists and editors and a three-year pay freeze. Meanwhile, Newsquest chief

executive Paul Davidson enjoyed a 20 per cent pay increase between 2008 and 2009. *The Argus* journalists held three days of strike action in December 2010 and January 2011. One NUJ member involved in the dispute highlighted the changed nature of local news production: "What's astonishing is that a local newspaper company doesn't seem to realise how damaging it is to keep shifting jobs out of the local area. There will be advertisers and readers who must wonder why they should support their local newspaper when it doesn't support them." [6] The *FT* and *Guardian* journalist Matthew Engel also reflected this view when reporting on one of many such disbutes: "My wife's job as editor of *Herefordshire Life* magazine has now been merged and is being done from Stoke-on-Trent, 100 miles away, which suggests that Archant [Norwich-based publisher of *Herefordshire Life*] treat the communities they serve with exactly the same respect they give the staff." [7] Newsquest claimed 'financial necessity' as reason for this quality-cutting streamlining, whilst Gannett, its American owner, boasted to US investment analysts of Newsquest's 'healthy profits', making a cool £71 million in 2009. [8] Quality, critical local journalism does not feature in their equation.

Local council freesheets are another type of free publication that has helped shift the character and impact of local 'news' production. Heather Brookes, author of *The Silent State*, has labelled these papers 'Pravda rags' and placed their emergence as stepping into the vacuum left by the decline of regional papers. [9] Between 1986 and 2000, half of Britain's 8,000 or so local journalists lost their jobs; between 1985 and 2005, nearly one quarter of all regional and local papers closed down. The competition brought by these government freesheets is keenly felt. For example, Tindle's South London Press announced in November 2007 that it had lost over £500,000 in advertising revenues since Lambeth Council launched its own freesheet, *Lambeth Life*. [10] Critical, original content was almost non-existent in the council freesheet, and criticism of the council policies and activities omitted. An LG Communications survey of council-funded freesheets found that the third most reported topic, at 52% of coverage, was "How the council provides value for money." [11]

In the 1970s,freesheets launched by smaller proprietors and wholly funded through advertising entered the market in a context of financial crisis and falling circulation faced by paid-for local newspapers. They provided one model to ensure the survival of many of these papers, but with their aims and quality of journalism transformed. Indeed, this was observed by many as a wider trend within the press industry at the time. In 1977, the Third Royal Commission on the Press noted that advertising contracts meant "the press has become a subsidiary of other industries." [12] This transition continues to be noted today with the introduction of another 'new' business model: free daily newspapers such as the Metro. In the words of Matthew Engel, "If the local press is to be saved, it cannot be left in the hands of the groups whose obscene profit demands have wrecked real journalism." [13]

the metro

Launched in Stockholm in 1995 by the Modern Times Group, a subsidiary of the Swedish telecommunications group Kinnevik, *Metro* was the first modern free daily newspaper. In 2000, MTG sold the majority of its shares in the newly formed, and now Luxembourg-based, Metro International S.A. Group. Editions in other countries followed soon and, by 2002, there were 23 editions in 15 countries, with a readership of 10 million (some 50% of the world's total circulation of free dailies).

Not all *Metro* titles are owned by Metro International, however. In Russia, Belgium and Britain, *Metro* is published by local publishers. The Canadian and South Korean *Metro*s are published, for legal reasons, in partnership with local firms.

The *Metro* business model was summarised by Arnoud and Peyrègne in the words, "Outsourcing is a keyword in the Metro business model." *Metro* publishers try to save money on everything, from news gathering, printing and distribution costs, to journalists. In 2005, only 10% of Metro International's total budget went to journalists.

The UK *Metro* was launched in London in 1999 by Associated Newspapers, part of Daily Mail and General Trust, to keep Metro International out of the UK market - except in Newcastle, where Metro International launched *Morning News*. The paper soon expanded to Birmingham and Manchester and later to other regions. It is the largest and one of the most profitable free papers in the world, with 10 different regional editions and a total circulation of 1.3 million. In most regions, *Metro* is a franchise, a model designed to stop local publishers from starting their own free morning dailies.

Notes:

[1] See, for example, Robert G. Picard, 'Strategic Responses to Free Distribution Daily Newspapers', *International Journal on Media Management*, vol.2, no.3, 2001.
[2] Peter Robins, 'The Death of Newspapers, 1921: London Evening Massacre', *The Guardian*, 23 September 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2009/sep/23/death-of-newspapers-1923.
[3] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain*, London: Routledge, 2003.
[4] Matthew Engel, 'Local Papers: An Obituary', *British Journalism Review*, vol.20, no.2, June 2009.
[5] Kevin Williams, *Read All About It!: A History of the British Newspaper*, London: Routledge, 2009.
[6] 'Argus journalists to go on third strike', *Brighton and Hove News*, 2 January 2011, http://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2011/01/argus-journalists-to-go-on-third-strike/
[7] Matthew Engel, 'Local Papers: An Obituary', *ibid.*
[8] Argus journalists to go on third strike', *ibid.*
[9] Heather Brooke, *The Silent State: Secrets, Surveillance and the Myth of British Democracy*, London: William Heinemann, 2010.
[10] http://blogs.pressgazette.co.uk/wire/5822 and http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2009/nov/22/council-run-newspapers-local-newspapers
[11] Heather Brooke, *ibid.*
[12] Royal Commission on the Press, *Final Report*, Cmnd 6810 July 1977.
[13] Matthew Engel, *ibid.*

business as usual.
the economics of ‘free’ dailies

The proliferation of free daily newspapers over the last decade has triggered wide-spread fears that newspapers as we know them are dying and being replaced by low-standard freesheets. Many scholars and commentators have argued that free papers represent a ‘new business model’. ***Shiar Youssef*** *argues that such claims are exaggerated and that the dichotomy created between free and paid-for papers is a false one.*

Since 1995, when the *Metro* was established in Sweden, over 250 free daily newspapers have been introduced in almost 60 countries, mostly in Europe. More than 45 million copies are read everyday by some 80 million people. In some countries, like Switzerland and Spain, free papers are the most widely read dailies. So how did this ‘new’ model develop, and how new is it really?

Business models

Broadly speaking, there are two main types of free newspaper publishers. The first represents new entrepreneurs -at least in theory- ‘invading’ the newspaper market with a new product, e.g. Metro International introducing the *Metro* in many European cities and the Norwegian Schbsted publishing different versions of *20 Minuten*. The main requirement for these firms is sound financial backing so as to afford loosing money during the initial intense competition period, until they expand and start to make profit. Indeed, Metro International only started making profit in 2006. In 2008, up to 70% of the 240 or so free titles in existence were still losing money.

The second business model, which includes almost all other free dailies, encompasses established local or national newspaper publishers that endeavour to prevent the first from entering the market in order to protect their market position with readers and advertisers. Examples include Associated Newspapers, which is owned by the Daily Mail & General Trust and publishes both free and paid-for papers (*Metro UK*, *Evening Standard* and *Daily Mail*), and News International, which is owned by Rubert Murdoch’s News Corp and publishes the *Sun*, *Times* and many other titles. Free dailies launched by these incumbent publishers are mostly ‘spoilers’, the main goal of which is to protect their publishers’ market position by preventing others from entering or surviving in the market. Sometimes this obstructionist approach is taken further, as evidenced by the numerous legal actions against new free dailies for all sort of issues, from using the word ‘newspaper’ to copyright and littering.

Other types of free daily newspapers, which should be differentiated from weekly or monthly promotional freesheets, include slimmed-down copies of normal paid-for papers as a marketing tool. Examples include *Standard Lite* and *FTpm*, but these are not our focus here. The two points to emphasise are that, first, these business models are typical of most industries and markets and, second, that many free papers are published by the same media giants that publish the majority of mainstream paid-for papers.

As cheap as it gets

For new entrepreneurs, profit opportunities are the only reason for entering and staying in business. In an already crowded market like that of newspapers, the easiest way of achieving this is through ruthless cost-cutting policies. Indeed, both Metro International and Schibsted have closed down free papers (e.g. in Zurich and Cologne) where big profits were not expected in the future.

“Outsourcing is a keyword in the Metro business model.”

Published mainly in metropolitan areas on weekdays, the *Metro*, and all the other titles that followed suite, utilised a cheap distribution method represented by local public transport systems, where a large number of people with ‘wasted’ time are concentrated in one place. This also ensured that each copy was read by more than one reader (two to four, according to industry figures). Public transport companies have gradually realised the profit opportunities presented by free papers distributed on public transport and their attitude towards free paper publishers is changing (demanding bigger shares of profits, etc.). At the extreme end, the Moscow *Metro* is published by the public transport company itself. Other distribution methods, such as door-to-door delivery in crowded urban areas, have also been used with less success. The important thing is reaching a large number of people with limited costs.

Another way of cutting costs has been to cut wages. A typical Metro International edition employs 40 people, only 15 to 20 of whom are journalists. The UK Metro has 90 or so staff and the Paris 20 Minutes has 26 professional journalists, but that is still significantly less than a typical paid-for paper. The small editorial

staff means free papers depend heavily on news wire service and third-party material (photographs and so on). For local and national publishers that also publish paid-for papers, they typically combine, or synergise, the activities of their free and paid-for papers, including joint advertising, distribution and even news gathering. For example, many news stories that appear in the *Metro* and *Evening Standard* can also be found in the *Daily Mail*. The result is a loss of original content and diversity of coverage, and further damage to investigative journalism.

Most free papers also outsource their production and distribution process. Most do not have their own printing plants, for instance. As the *Metro* owners put it, "Outsourcing is a keyword in the Metro business model."

Free wars

On 30 August 2006, Associated Newspapers turned its *Standard Lite*, which had been launched in London in 2004 to prevent other publishers from entering the evening free paper market, into *London Lite* as a spoiler against News International's planned evening free daily, *The London Paper*, which was launched a week later. Attracted by the substantial profits that *Metro,* had started to make, *The London Paper* itself was intended as a spoiler against *Evening Standard* (both the *Metro* and *Evening Standard* are owned by Associated Newspapers).

"Monopoly is the norm rather than the exception."

Within months, *The London Paper* was distributing 500,000 copies, about 100,000 more than *London Lite*. The three-year period of ruthless competition between the two companies (what has come to be known as the London free paper war, between 2006 and 2009) can be explained as a typical short-term business strategy of defence and prevention.

Back in April 2005, the Office of Fair Trading, pushed by former London mayor Ken Livingstone, who is said to be a long-time enemy of the 'Mail lot' (Associated Newspapers is owned by the Daily Mail & General Trust), had decided to open up the afternoon slot on the London underground to other papers to compete with the *Stadard*. Transport for London (TfL) was expecting to generate a revenue of £4.6 million from the process but the bids were apparently too low and the tender was cancelled in April 2006. Instead, both Associated Newspapers and News International opted for recruiting armies of low-paid distributors to hand out their papers outside busy stations.

Both papers, *London Lite* and *The London Paper*, lost tens of millions of pounds in the three-year 'war'. According to industry figures, *The London Paper* lost over £9m in the year to June 2009, £4m more than the anticipated budget. In its first 10 months alone, it lost almost £17m. The steady increase in advertising revenue, from £7.6m in 2006-7 to 14.4m in 2008-9, was not enough, especially in light of the recession and the accompanying decline in advertising revenue in general. Of course, Associated claimed *Lite* was part of its long-term strategy and a complement to its 'successful' morning paper, *Metro*, although this clearly affected its then paid-for paper, the *Evening Standard*, which raised its price from 40 to 50p and sold 23.5 percent fewer copies a year later.

Many media commentators at the time lamented this "expensive, unnecessary war." But was it? It is considered 'normal' for big competitors to lose money in the first few years until one or a few of them eventually dominate the market and drive all the others out. Indeed, News Corp's James Murdoch is said to have refused to strike a deal with the Daily Mail & General Trust to cut losses in the London market until it was too late.

Once *The London Paper* exited the market, on 18 September 2009, and the *Evening Standard*, now 75% owned by Russian billionaire Alexander Lebedev, went free, the *London Lite*, still owned by Associated's parent company Daily Mail & General Trust, was also stopped. The staff at both papers either lost their jobs or were reassigned somewhere else within the companies. While Associated celebrated its 'victory', News International sought solace in the fact that it forced DMGT to sell a majority stake in the *Evening Standard*.

The London Paper and *London Lite* were quite similar in content; the battle was mostly a marketing one: from similar launch publicity blazes, competing teams of distributors wearing similar purple or yellow T-shirts, to a spat over alleged dumping of paper bundles. Associated has even accused News International of gaining access to its business plan for *London Lite*. Both papers had opted for purple mastheads, leading to accusations of 'copycat' from both sides. In any case, the result was a large cross-over between the two papers' readership - according to some studies, 60 percent of London commuters picked up both papers.

The happy monopolists

With launching costs ranging between £5 and £15 million and an expected loss period of 3 to 7 years before breaking even, not many publishers would dare enter the free paper market, and fewer would manage to stay in business for long. Indeed, in many countries only one, two or three out of a dozen free papers introduced have survived the initial competition period. In Sweden, there is only one free daily left; in France, Switzerland and Spain, *20 Minuten* and/or *Metro* are the most read newspapers in the country, while most of the others have closed down. After a peak of 42 million copies in 2008, total free dailies circulation worldwide has been declining, especially in Europe, where 60% of free papers are distributed. According to many industry observers, such as Piet Bakker, the average circulation growth rate of 60% - though non-linear throughout - seems to have reached "a saturation point."

In economic theory, industries going through their 'mature phase' exhibit greater degrees of concentration as a few large firms dominate the market. Products become more standardised and are mass-produced with more efficiency (in an economic sense), allowing these firms to increase their output, and therefore profits, while reducing long-term costs (this is known in economics as 'economies of scale'). A technological innovation, such as the introduction of free papers, may reset the industry life cycle and save it from decline. With such industry structure, however, the motivation for real innovation is minimal and profits are maximised mainly through management efficiency, i.e. saving money on everything, including journalism. While free market economics strives on the myth of 'perfect competition', most real-life markets, including that of newspapers, are 'imperfectly competitive'. In other words, monopoly is the norm rather than the exception.

A quick scan of local and regional papers in the UK, for instance, shows that most are published by a handful of big newspaper groups (Johnston Press, Northcliffe, Tindle Newspapers, Trinity Mirror and Newsquest). In the age of multinationals, these monopolies are also increasingly globalised: A few giants are progressively dominating newspaper publishing across the industrialised world. Indeed, a new role of 'global marketing vice president' has recently been created at Metro International following a decision to increase the company's marketing activities on the global market.

The free dailies market shows similar trends. In most European countries, monopoly now seems to be the dominant business model. Furthermore, the majority of free newspapers are owned by big publishers that also publish paid-for newspapers and control more than half of the newspaper circulation in Europe. This also allows them to combine activities (joint advertising packages, shared content, etc.), as indicated above.

The competition myth is often justified by consumers' interests in terms of better quality and diversity, lower prices and so on. However, this overlooks the fact that this kind of competition is often not on content but on driving down costs (as in 'price wars'). The result is a

business model that emphasises advertising and profits over serious news and other editorial content. It is no longer editors who make final decisions but the CEOs of the publishing companies or the heads of the advertising departments.

Free paper monopolies are often secured through exclusive distribution deals with transport authorities, as in the case of *Metro* and *Evening Standard*. Even if the competition authorities tried to prevent this, the monopolists' large economies of scale mean very few publishers can actually compete with them. Mergers and buy-outs consolidate their power even further, as seen recently with the merger of *Metro* and *Herald AM* in Ireland (*Metro Herald*).

Recent plans put forward by culture secretary Jeremy Hunt will scrap barriers to cross-media ownership at a regional level. The proposed regulation (or deregulation, rather) has been described by media commentators as a 'big bang' similar to the one that 'revolutionised' the City in the 1980s and led the way to the recent financial crisis. A communications bill that is supposed to herald "a new age of converged media" is expected soon.

At the Edinburgh International Television Festival last year, News Corporation's chairman and chief executive for Europe and Asia, James Murdoch, attacked the BBC and warned of the dangers of 'state interference' in the 'independent' media industry, calling for comprehensive deregulation. His true intentions, however, were revealed in the conclusion of his speech: "The only reliable, durable and perpetual guarantor of independence is profit." News Corp has since been trying to take over British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB), which will make it "a company of unprecedented scale and cross-media power that has the capability to bundle together print and broadcast news and other content in a way that would stifle rivals and dominate debate," as one commentator put it.

"Commuters are a captive audience with 'wasted' time, who may give more attention to advertising messages."

'All the rest is advertising'

A big part of the hostility that free papers were initially met with from traditional publishers was to do with concerns that these may undermine their advertising base, and not really about circulation and readership. There is, in fact, evidence that readership and circulation figures for most paid-for papers were either not, or only marginally, affected by the advance of free dailies.

Newspapers operate in a so-called dual-product market: they sell content to readers and sell access to those readers to advertisers. The increased pressure on space, along with the increased flow of news, meant that newspapers have moved away from reports to 'stories' chopped and shaped to fit ready-made templates. With the development of lifestyle and consumer journalism, the news function was increasingly subdued to papers' function as advertising delivery systems and promoters of capitalist culture. Free papers are a continuation of this trend, which also saw many newspapers switching from broadsheet to tabloid or compact size. And of course, it's not just about size; the claims of 'tabloidisation' of newspapers certainly bear some truth.

Most newspapers today depend much more on advertising revenue than they do on sales. Newspapers are considered financially 'healthy' when two-thirds (or up to 70%) of their income is derived from advertising. Over a quarter of this is derived from classified adverts, but most of these are moving online now.

Paradoxically, studies have shown that too many adverts mean that up to 45 percent of all print advertisements are skipped by readers. And that's partly why publishers have been thinking about, and investing in, targeted advertising. Newspapers offer possibilities of 'contextual advertising': a wide range of editorial content combined with commercial messages, e.g. adverts for sports goods in the sports section; product promotions presented as news on business and technology pages and so on. In this sense, free papers are not that much different from paid-for papers or, indeed, from radio and TV, which are solely dependent on advertising income (save for public broadcasting and state-owned media). Transnational dot.com companies, such as Google, Yahoo and others, are also fully dependent on advertising revenue.

The difference is that, instead of money, free paper readers (often commuters) exchange their time for content. Commuters are a captive audience that may give more attention to advertising messages. The *Metro* has roughly a 50-50 advertising-editorial ratio. The London free papers only managed to reach 25-75, which is partly why they were stopped.

Despite free dailies' claims that they attract a new target audience (younger non-readers) and a different type of advertisers (clubs, theatres, small retailers, etc.), the fact remains that free papers have generated new advertising income for publishers at a time when advertising revenue was drying up due to the recession and many advertisers' moving online.

Changes in income streams (mainly from advertising) not only affect newspapers' choices about employment and work processes, but also content. Newspapers 'adjust' to advertiser's needs and there have been many examples of companies' withdrawing their advertising from an 'offending' paper following the publication of what advertisers regard as 'negative' coverage. The result is often self-censorship by the paper the next time round. A good deal of the content of business, technology and cultural pages is little more than subtle advertising and PR by private businesses. Commercial journalism is the norm rather than the exception.

Scenarios

Elite and business newspapers (*Guardian*, *FT*, etc.) and strong local brands have proved they can survive the free paper 'invasion'. The main victims seem to be weaker local brands and general news titles. But this cannot all be blamed on free papers, as many commentators and journalists have done. Indeed, over the past 20 years, most of Britain's local dailies lost between 40 and 70 percent of their sales. This has been partly due to the development of new forms of mass media as the main source of news, notably the Internet, but also because of the gradual deterioration in the quality and journalistic standards of the mainstream media. After all, why pay when you can get pretty much the same news for free? A quick comparison of the prime news pages of the UK *Metro* and *The Times*, for instance, or the *Evening Standard* and the *Daily Mail*, would indeed prove this point (see '*The cost of free*' article in this issue).

The future of newspapers has been the subject of much analysis and speculation. One of the dramatic scenarios suggested is the slow death of paid-for papers. With Microsoft's Bill Gates predicting (in 2005) that the internet will attract $30 billion in advertising revenue annually within the next three years, free content paid for by advertising looked like the only business model in town. The decision of the new owner of *Evening Standard* to make the London evening paper free in the hope of reaching a larger, advertiser-pleasing audience has been repeatedly cited as an indication of this. Others, however, have talked about a 'conspiracy' that, having effectively killed all competition in the evening free paper market in the capital, Associated Newspapers will start charging for the *Evening Standard* again.

Another possible scenario is a gradual increase in newspaper prices,

"Free papers are just another method for the same companies to generate profits."

coupled with charging for online content. This is Rupert Murdoch's more traditional line of thinking, and his News Corp has, indeed, started putting some of its titles behind paywalls. *The Times*, *Sunday Times* and *News of the World* are now only accessible to subscribers, with *The Sun* following soon. Many national and regional titles had already upped their cover prices last year. But while this may actually work for so-called quality papers (the *Financial Times* and *Wall Street Journal* already charge online readers), once the free papers trend is over, it is unlikely to work for most general news papers and tabloids, given the availability of similar content for free elsewhere. Some of these have been experimenting with various types of paywalls and subscription methods, but without much success. It should be stressed that the main reason behind this shift is not that readers are moving online but that many advertisers have moved online.

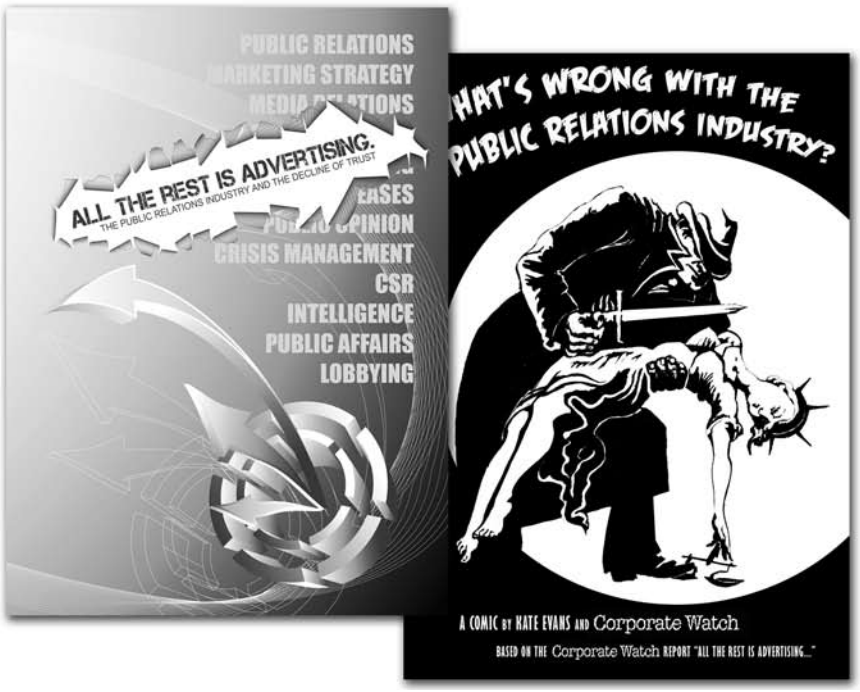
Other possible 'solutions' suggested include government subsidies (as in France, where Nicolas Sarkozy last year introduced a scheme to 'help' 18- to -24-year-olds receive one free copy of the paper of their choice every week for a year) or philanthropic papers (as in the 'clubland' evening papers of the early twentieth century, where sympathetic millionaires would fund elitist, limited-circulation papers). Both of these are, at best, short-term interventions and pose difficult questions about the influence of the state and the rich over the supposed independence of the press. Both models would not also generate much, if any, profit and are, therefore, unlikely to be pursued by publishers as a model for mass-circulation newspapers, as opposed to political or community newsletters.

The most likely scenario, thus, appears to be the coexistence of free and paid-for papers (the accumulation rather than substitution model). Research commissioned by the British Journalism Review in 2006 suggested that newspapers in general may have a longer self-life than many believe, and that the model of cinema, which adapted to TV rather than being overwhelmed by it, might be more appropriate. True, there are already more free local papers than paid-for ones, but the latter still survive. Nationals could be the same. And true, the industry structure may change a little; we might see more mergers or break-ups, larger or smaller monopolies; but as far as economics is concerned, not much will change.

Part of the problem that newspaper groups now face - one that tends to be conveniently ignored - is that, for years, they sat on supernormal profits: most large newspaper companies had profit margins exceeding 20 percent during the last few decades of the twentieth century and many have accumulated vast amounts of debt to meet their greedy shareholders' demands for ever-greater returns. Now all they can do, apart from cutting jobs and costs, is look for new profits: online and from selling the 'new' readers of 'free' papers to advertisers.

The viability of the free paper model is the wrong question and the dichotomy created between free and paid-for papers is a false one. In light of paid-for sales declining, free papers are just another delivery method devised by the same publishers. To put it bluntly, they are just another way for the same companies to generate profits. They may well rejuvenate a flagging industry that has been shooting itself in the foot with commercial guns and prove, once again, that market economy does not simply commit suicide, as many of us would like to think.

** References are available in the online version of this article on the Corporate Watch website: www.corporatewatch.org.*



new publications

Chronicling the creation of PR firms by former politicians, *'All the Rest is Advertising'* reveals how PR has turned parliamentary democracy into a branch of business relations.
In *'Whats Wrong With the Public Relations Industry',* Kate Evans wittily uses the metaphor of cosmetic surgery to provide an accessible summary of the report findings.

the cost of free.
what's wrong with free dailies

Free daily newspapers may provide easily acquired basic news and information for free, but the social, political, journalistic and other costs are too high to overlook. From limited original content and lack of investigative journalism to environmental impact, everything is sacrificed for the maximisation of profits.

Quick is bad

When Associated Newspapers' *London Lite* and News International's *The London Paper* were launched in London in 2006, with 'colourful' designs and an 'upbeat' attitude, many commentators and observers were quick to level charges against the free papers, often contrasting them against the *Evening Standard*'s 'serious' journalism. When the *Standard* went free, many also lamented that it had "gone downmarket". Few were honest, or brave, enough to point out that very similar criticisms could be levelled at almost all Fleet Street titles, even the so-called 'quality papers'.

To attract occasional readers (mostly commuters), free dailies like the *Metro* have created an editorial profile based on short stories designed for a quick read (up to 20 minutes, the estimated time of a tube or bus trip in big cities). These papers typically provide the latest celebrity and entertainment 'news', peppered with a selection of national and international headline stories, which are mainly sourced from news wires and PR agencies. Similarly, images and other visuals are also sourced from third-parties.

A typical issue of the UK *Metro*, for instance, combines collapsed versions of high- and low-brow stories that attempt to please a wide range of audiences. The news headlines - a mixture of political, social and crime stories squeezed into 4 or 5 of the 72 pages – try to shock and attract, but are often less sensationalist than many tabloids (the *Sun,* say). The *Evening Standard* (64 pages) has traditionally had an 'upwardly mobile accent', with a focus on 'glamour' and the rich and famous of London. This is most evident in the free glossy lifestyle magazine, *ES*, that accompanies the paper on Fridays. *City AM* (32 pages) has a more specifically defined readership (bankers and City workers) and reflects that outlook quite faithfully, but still shares the model of "sound-bite journalism," as one of the *Metro*'s early editors, Tim Jotischky, described his then paper. The same can be said about most regional free papers.

On the defensive, free paper editors and chief executives tend to refuse accusations of 'dumbing down.' In 2006, the head of Associated Newspapers' free newspapers division, Steve Auckland, told the BBC: "It actually requires a lot of skill to produce short copy, to write four paragraphs instead of 12 and still capture the essence of the story." That might be true to some extent but does not tell us anything about the lack of investigative journalism and original content. The key word is 'copy' not 'short'. As one journalist, Don Berry, put it, "The *Metro*s... are great processors of available news; they are not in the business of digging out the difficult stuff."

Are paid-for papers any better?

In 2005, a report by the Project for Excellence in Journalism concluded that reading the whole of *Metro*, a reader would probably know as much about the world as from reading the first (news) section of any national daily. Indeed, most free dailies do an acceptable job of providing an overview of current affairs compared to many tabloids. Some, such as the *Metro* and *20 Minuten*, actually have more local news than most national papers, and often do a better job of providing local entertainment and life-style material, sports and listings.

This does not mean, of course, that free dailies are doing an adequate job. Rather, it means that paid-for newspapers have become so bad that a free paper, with far fewer journalists and editors and a much lower budget, can compete with them and threaten their readership and advertising base. The 'death of journalism' cannot be blamed on free dailies alone. In fact, instead of emphasising and competing on the basis of what distinguishes them (investigations, in-depth analysis, commentary), most mainstream newspapers opted for 'tabloidisation', pioneered in the UK in 2003 by the *Independent*. Free papers display more acutely problems with the commercial mainstream press, and their 'success' has only brought paid-for papers closer to this profit-driven model. The transformation of news into mere packaging and marketing of information has simply become more visible and grotesque with free papers.

PR agencies

The reasons behind the shift in editorial emphasis to lifestyle and consumer journalism, particularly in the 1980s, were mainly economic rather than cultural or generational, as it is sometimes claimed. In increasingly tight and competitive markets, the concern of newspapers' owners was on filling pages with as little cost as possible. Much more reliant upon advertising revenues, this was taken even further by free papers. When Associated Newspapers launched its first *Metro* in London, the paper had only 35 journalistic staff, compared to 250 at the then paid-for *Evening Standard*. Investigative journalism, in-depth analysis and other costly exercises such as foreign correspondents all went out with the staff, replaced by a heavy reliance on third-party material.

In November 2010, the editorial director of Trinity Mirror regionals, Neil Benson, told the Society of Editors conference that, to look for new money, regionals should move into PR and do marketing on behalf of their clients: "People who work in the regional press know what it takes to hit the spot in terms of press releases. So why shouldn't all regional publishers think about launching arm's-length PR agencies or a full-service agency?" What Benson did not say is that much of what is presented as news today already does that.

"This does not mean, of course, that free dailies are doing an adequate job. Rather, it means that paid-for newspapers have become so bad."

Readers or consumers?

Studies of time consumption patterns across the world show a steady reduction in reading time, which started with the introduction of TV in the 1960s and culminated with the advance of the Internet in the late 1990s. This, coupled with a loss of trust in deteriorating mainstream journalism, has led many people to stop seeing newspapers as their main source of news and information. Efforts to make newspapers more accessible so as to attract younger or less-well-educated readers have often been translated into oversimplification of complex issues. Free paper editors often seem to equate youth interests with entertainment and celebrity news. Similar assumptions underlie much of the material dedicated to woman readers, who are assumed to be only interested in fashion, cosmetic products and keeping 'fit'.

In addition to content changes, free papers have tried to attract readers by changing aspects of the format, making it more flashy, clumsy and messy. The underlying assumption has been that this will attract younger generations who are not habitual newspaper readers. However, studies (for example among Belgian students) have shown that young readers do not actually like flashy layouts that stress format over content, but prefer to be taken seriously and treated like adults.

The stereotyping often applied to 'youth' and 'women's' content is a consequence of prioritising the needs of advertisers to create and maintain easy consumer 'profiles' amongst the general public. By viewing readers as mere marketing target groups, free papers maintain consumerist lifestyles and turn papers into little more than advertising vehicles to reach potential consumers. Newspapers not only respond to what readers supposedly want but also make them. By creating a particular selection of 'news', edited in a particular way, a particular reader identity is gradually constructed, with readers identifying with certain social and political ideals and attitudes.

To the right

Whenever free papers do take an editorial angle on current political affairs, it is often as bad as that of most right-wing tabloids and broadsheets (the *Mail*, *Telegraph*, etc.), though the *Metro* does try to be more 'balanced'. This is most obvious in their support of the Conservatives (remember the *Evening Standard*'s pro-Boris, anti-Ken campaign in the London mayoral contest?) and their coverage of immigration-related issues, which is packed with both outright and more subtle racism. This is unsurprising given that most free dailies are owned by the same companies that publish some of the most notoriously right-wing paid-for papers, the classic example being Associated Newspapers, which owns the *Daily Mail*, *Evening Standard* and the *Metro*, among other titles.

Bad for the environmental too

A few months into the so-called London free paper war between News International and Associated Newspapers in 2006, the Westminster Council threatened to ban free paper distribution in the capital due to increasing litter problems. Free papers apparently accounted for a quarter of street litter in some parts of the West End. In January 2008, the two companies finally agreed to install only 35 recycling bins each in the West End and Victoria areas of London. Each recycling bin cost no more than £500. According to the council, only 120 tonnes of paper was collected via the scheme in six whole months. According to tube maintenance firm Tube Line, 16 tonnes of rubbish was collected from the underground every day during that period, following a 43 percent rise caused by the arrival of the two free papers.

The amount of paper used in the production of free papers is huge, with much of it going straight to landfill. In an attempt to polish their image, both *The London Paper* and *London Lite* initiated campaigns urging their readers to recycle newspapers after reading. Whilst this PR exercise may have looked good on paper, it certainly contradicted with the line both publishers were selling to advertisers: that free papers offered more bang for advertisers' buck with each copy being read by multiple readers. If each person were to diligently put their free paper into a recycling bin once they had finished their 20-minute read, they would not be left for the next reader to pick up.

The campaign also fed into a framing of 'solutions' to environmentally damaging activities that is universally convenient for corporations: individualising both the damaging activity and the proposed solution, and holding consumers responsible for them. Thus, the problem is careless readers rather than the newspaper producers, and the 'solution' is the reader recycling the newspaper rather than the company changing production methods or ceasing production altogether.

However good and responsible it may sound, recycling does not get to the heart of the matter: the source of the paper used in the first place. To make one tonne of newsprint, or print 14,000 average-sized tabloids, 12 substantial trees are needed. At the height of the London free paper war, it was estimated that 1.5 million free papers were distributed in the city alone every day, equivalent to 107 tonnes of newsprint and 1,284 trees. This figure is cut substantially when recycling is taken into account with a simple equation. However, as unsold magazines make up most of the recycled paper usable to make newspapers, and because newspapers can only be recycled a maximum of 5 or 6 times before the fibres are too short, the original source is very present within the supply chain.

newspapers or free papers.

Newspapers can never be free in a society that really values democracy. Propaganda rag sheets that actively undermine democracy, however, can be, and are, distributed for free or for next to nothing. This, of course, speaks volumes to the antidemocratic nature of the times we live in, as newspapers have the potential to serve as a priceless ally in the daily struggle for justice and equality. Yet, paradoxically, this is exactly what they have become: priceless, not to the public, but to the ruling elites attempting to profitably manage us. By ***Michael Barker***

Free 'news'-papers might be considered antidemocratic on two counts. Firstly, such papers do not provide news to the public; instead, they provide carefully refined propaganda crafted as news. This information is not intended to stimulate and educate its readers; it is information that is meant to be consumed and assimilated, and is created in a way that strictly limits the educative value of any ensuing public debates that concern its dubious content. Real news, on the other hand, requires substantial amounts of money to produce, while the rewriting of press releases does not. This explains why many newspapers are so cheap: they are cheap because their production comes at a high price. The real price we pay with - perhaps unwittingly - is our freedom.

Secondly, considering that the costs of producing a press release-filled paper are minimal, the public have become socialised to the idea that they can have professionally produced content for next to no monetary outlay. Thus, by externalising the costs of production, free 'news'-papers actually make it harder for journalists intent on strengthening democracy to make a viable livelihood. This is because authentic writers and publishers seeking to produce educational fare cannot sell their work for its true value as most people are simply unwilling to part with such comparatively large sums of money. Consequently, the circulation of papers that seek to promote news and not corporate propaganda tend to struggle to make ends meet, and they certainly find it difficult, if not impossible, to grow.

In recent decades, more democratically minded journalists have chosen to bypass the corporate press and now use the Internet to publish their reports and articles. But while such changes have proven useful in breaking existing communicative barriers, the virtual world of 'news'-making still remains dominated by the same corporate behemoths that regulate the paper propaganda-scape. This necessarily means that writers of non-corporate-aligned material tend to find themselves preaching to the converted and for little or no monetary renumeration. Even the largest US-based news outlets, like ZNet and CounterPunch, struggle to get even a fraction of their many readers to part with money; money that is urgently required to support their valuable news services. The same is true, of course, of Corporate Watch and many other radical news collectives throughout the world.

This lack of financial support is severely problematic as it means that most authentic news writers are forced to write in their spare time. Undertaking meaningful work under such limited circumstances is no easy task, and

"The real price we pay with - perhaps unwittingly - is our freedom."

means that many of the people who write news tend to be from privileged backgrounds. The reliance upon such privilege makes it hard for the producers of news to be truly representative of the public they seek to write about. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that readers begin to financially support such alternative endeavours so they can employ writers from all walks of life.

It is true that real newspapers cannot easily compete with the financial clout of corporate freepapers, but it is still possible to create meaningful publications that can contribute to envisaging alternative political vistas. However, if these newspapers are to engender democratic values that strive to represent all points of views, it is essential that they are not free. Democratic non-corporate newspapers, and not so-called freepapers, are the way forward. This means that we must start paying a reasonable price for the journalism we value, and should continue to strive to create newspapers that provide content that is relevant to the democratic needs of the public, not the anti-democratic needs of the corporate world.

FREE
LONDON
Shite
SPORT
bla bla 1-0

feature

more than a spoof.

Spoofs are nothing new. As a form of parody, they are works created to mock or poke fun at an original work, its subject, author or style by means of humorous, satiric or ironic imitation. The word 'parody' derives from the Greek *parodia*, which was a narrative poem imitating the style of epics but dealing with light or satirical subjects. Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin argued, eight decades ago, that parody has a "carnival sense of the world" as opposed to "that one-sided and gloomy official seriousness which is dogmatic and hostile to evolution and change."

In journalism, parody has been used since newspapers started. In the 18th century, there were several papers specialised in parodying other newspapers, such as the *English Lucien* in England and the *Courant* in the US. Present-day equivalents include *Private Eye*.

Spoof papers are often used to make a political point. For instance, in protest at what popular newspapers tended to publish as items 'of interest to women' (beauty, entertainment, gossip, etc.), the League of Women Voters in the US produced a spoof newspaper in 1920s, called *Ballot Box Review*, which presented a gendered world turned on its head. More recently, particularly in the context of the anti-capitalist movement, spoofs have become a popular form of subversion or 'culture jamming' targeting corporate mainstream media.

Below we showcase some of these spoofs produced in the UK over the past few years by different groups on different subjects.

Evading Standards (June 1999)

One of the early anti-capitalist spoofs, this 'special edition' of the *Evening Standard* never saw the light as police swooped and confiscated the copies before they could be distributed. The spoof was meant to coincide with the J18 protests in London, an international day of protest against the 25th G8 summit in Cologne. Under the headline 'Global market meltdown', the frontpage story claimed that "Panic stalks Square Mile following dramatic collapse of world financial markets." An editorial titled 'Game over for apocalypse roulette' explained that "Our front page story may not have told the truth, but one thing is true – things have got to change." The rest of the 32-page paper included commentary and analysis from an anti-capitalist perspective, in addition to call-outs and information for action.

Financial Crimes (September 2000)

A 16-page spoof of the *Financial Times* produced by activists from Reclaim The Streets, a collection of activist groups who staged events to reclaim public spaces for common ownership, such as mass street parties on motorways. The spoof coincided with an international day of action against the 55th annual meeting of the World Bank and IMF in Prague on 26th September 2000. Printed on the *FT* copy-righted pink paper, the spoof looked similar to the real paper, except that it exposed and opposed the catastrophes caused and crimes committed by the global financial and governance institutions, instead of justifying them. Despite the humour running through most pages, the articles were mostly serious and factual. Outlining their reasons for doing the spoof, the editorial collective said they "want to contribute to the growth of alternative, non-corporate media" and "disseminate the information that never makes the pages of daily newspapers."

In 2009, climate change activists produced another *Financial Times* spoof to coincide with the G20 protests in London. FT's advertising strapline "We live in Financial Times" was changed to "We live on Financial Crimes." Set in 2020, the spoof paper was a critique of financial journalism and the complacent business class that is killing the planet for profit. Thousands of copies were handed out to London commuters and the spoof's website, ft2020.com, is still up online.

The Spun (November 2001)

A 24-page spoof of *The Sun* by anonymous anti-war activists. The front page story, 'Shop 'til they drop', combined a critique of consumerism and the then new 'war on terror', with Tony Blair urging Spun readers to "get out and spend, spend, spend for freedom!" The rest of the spoof analysed the 'war on terror', the war on Afghanistan, economic globalisation and the global grassroots movement against it. The Sun was, and still is, one of the worst war-mongering British tabloids, supporting the UK's military adventures and the 'war on terror'.

The Sun had been spoofed before. On 1st May 1986, a 4-page spoof of the Murdoch-owned paper was produced by anarchists to support the News International printers strike at Wapping. The spoof's frontpage headline was 'Murdoch fucks donkeys'.

Hate Mail (April 2005)

In the run-up to the 2005 general election, activists from Manchester No Borders produced a spoof of the *Daily Mail* to highlight the tabloids' racist misrepresentation of issues surrounding asylum seekers and migrants. Although the spoofers had in mind all tabloids' "influx of lies and waves of untruths," the *Daily Mail* was singled out due to its long history of campaigning against immigration and supporting the far-right. Under the headline 'Asylum seeker ate my hamster' (a take on a famous 1986 headline in *The Sun*, 'Freddie Starr ate my hamster'), the frontpage story mocked the constant demonising and criminalising of migrants by mainstream media. Not the whole 12-page paper was spoof, however; some of the content was serious. A double-page spread, under the title 'You are being lied to', countered mainstream myths about immigration and asylum created by the media. Other articles talk about migrants' everyday suffering and how campaigners can help.

Another *Hate Mail* spoof had appeared on Mayday 2002, with articles on a wide range of subjects, from capitalism, imperialist wars and monarchy to workers struggles. The front page story claimed that "Anarchy is erupting in the towns, villages and cities of the UK."

East London Adversaries (September 2005)

An 8-page spoof of the *East London Advertiser* by Disarm DSEi, a group of anti-militarist activists that has been mobilising against the biannual arms fair at the ExCeL centre in London's Docklands since 2001. Although the spoof looked similar to the real paper, the content was serious information about the mobilisation and the arms trade.

Mesho (April 2008)

A 16-page spoof of the *Metro* by a group of squatters and activists in London and Brighton. 'Mesho' is an anagram of 'homes'. The frontpage story, 'Epidemic hits Queen', claimed that a group of squatters, calling themselves 'Palacites', had been discovered in one of the Queen's personal walk-in wardrobes at Buckingham Palace, causing "outrage" for the royal family and concern for the government that "the news could cause an epidemic of ordinary, law abiding citizens to start taking housing into their own hands." The rest of the paper analysed housing issues, the Olympics "blight", as well as providing advice for squatters and homeless people.

Three separate printers pulled out at the last minute fearing a legal comeback by the Metro publishers. One printer's excuse was that they printed the actual Metro. The same has happened with other Metro spoofs as well (see below).

Metr0 (June 2010)

An anti-racist spoof of the *Metro* to coincide with two days of action against racist press, called by a coalition of anti-racist and No Border groups under the name Press Action. Tens of thousands of copies that looked very similar to the free daily were distributed at 20 busy tube stations around London by 50 or so distributors wearing white T-shirts bearing the Metro logo and blue baseball caps. Thousands more were distributed in other cities around the country.

Under the headline 'Gordon Brown to be deported to Scotland', the front page story claimed the former prime minister was facing imminent removal back to his "home country", as the new coalition government introduced new immigration rules that imposed further restrictions on "non-English nationals." The rest of the spoof featured a Metro-style '60-Second interview' with a real-life ex-detainee, a myth-buster about asylum and immigration, an 'immigration newspeak' glossary, racist quotes from the mainstream press and a couple of more in-depth articles on immigration controls and protests against them. The Metro website was also spoofed, with a layout resembling that of the paper's official website but with the content of the spoof paper.

The day after the spoofing operation, the Metro owners, Associated Newspapers, obtained a High Court injunction against "all persons responsible for the publication and/or distribution" of the spoof and served it upon different groups that they thought might have been connected with the action, including the people running the Press Action blog, Indymedia UK and the London Action Resource Centre (LARC). After a few months and legal costs running up to £40,000 they also managed take down the spoof site through the domain registrar in the US.

corporate media & the intellectual cleansing of journalists.

In the article below, a version of which was first published by MediaLens in October 2008, ***Jonathan Cook*** *describes his experience of 'intellectual cleansing' while working as a journalist for free and paid-for papers.*

It's all about money

Free newspapers in the mid-1980s were a new and rapidly growing form of print media. Cheap production had been made possible by the new technologies about to revolutionise the working practices of all papers, including those in Fleet Street. I was using a small Macintosh computer, writing stories and designing the pages, at a time when the nationals were still laboriously typesetting. At the *Southampton Advertiser*, we produced a weekly newspaper with just four editorial staff: an editor, two reporters and a photographer. The advertising staff team was more than twice that size.

By definition, free newspapers are advertising platforms, since they have no other way of raising revenue. But when they first emerged, some of the independently owned ones were not as dire as they uniformly are today. The *Southampton Advertiser* was one of a small chain of free newspapers on the south coast owned by a local businessman. He made no effort to conceal the fact that he saw his newspapers simply as vehicles for making money.

Most ambitious journalists start out on a daily local newspaper (I would soon end up on one), owned by one of a handful of large media groups. There, as I would learn, one quickly feels all sorts of institutional constraints on one's reporting. As a young journalist, if you know no better, you simply come to accept that journalism is done in a certain kind of way; that certain stories are suitable and others unsuitable, and that arbitrary rules have to be followed. These seem like laws of nature, unquestionable and self-evident to your more experienced colleagues. Being a better journalist requires that these work practices become second nature.

The *Advertiser*, however, offered a far more enlightening and free-wheeling environment for a young journalist. Larger newspapers structure their offices in such a way as to ensure that editorial and advertising staff keep an ostentatious distance from each other, usually on separate floors – as if underscoring to everyone that editorial judgements are free of commercial concerns. At the *Advertiser* we dispensed with such niceties. The advertising staff were next door and we freely mingled and socialised.

An important concern for the *Advertiser*'s owner was getting his paper better read than the local evening paper, the *Evening Echo*, as it was then called, so that he could attract advertising away from it and charge more per page to the advertisers. It was a form of genuine, and short-lived, competition between local newspapers. Independently owned free sheets like the *Advertiser* created a real battle for readers with the paid-for evening papers, a situation that had been unknown for many decades in almost all British cities. Today, free newspapers are derided, and for good reason.

"By definition, free newspapers are advertising platforms."

The *Advertiser* became a genuine threat to the commercial interests of the *Evening Echo*. Even with a tiny staff, the *Advertiser* had far more interesting stories than the evening paper. Humiliatingly, the *Echo* was forced to run follow-ups of our stories when our exclusive reports raised questions in the city council chamber. Readers started abandoning the evening paper: why pay for your news when you can get it better written and delivered through your door for free?

Shortly after I had been poached by the *Echo*, the *Advertiser* was bought out by the evening paper's owners. The staff of the free sheet were relocated to the *Echo*'s building and my former paper was eviscerated. Within a short time, a new editor was appointed and the paper's hard-hitting reports were ditched. Life-style features and syndicated material dominated instead. One of my former

colleagues would confide in the pub that his job was now to rewrite press releases. The *Advertiser* stopped being a rival to the *Echo*; it became simply an advertising supplement to it. Its rapid fate has been shared by all the other free sheets that tried to compete with a local established daily paper.

Forget about Woodward and Bernstein

It is, of course, no surprise that a large newspaper would want to devour a threatening smaller one. That is the nature of the free market. But, given journalists' assumptions about the workings of a free press, should the *Echo* not have had every interest, after destroying the *Advertiser*, in learning from the latter's success? Even with the restoration of its monopoly, would it not have a commercial interest in seeking to win back the loyalty of local readers?

"The investigative reporter is the exception in journalism rather than the model."

Unlike most media owners, the *Advertiser*'s original proprietor was not a corporate player; he was a local businessman who had spotted an opening in the media market created by new technology. This created a conflict of interest for him that, for a time, favoured the readers of his newspapers. It may also be that this was a short-term strategy by the proprietor. He knew that if he could take away readers from the *Echo*, the evening paper would be forced to buy him out. Interestingly, the *Echo* set up a rival free sheet to try to kill the *Advertiser* but it never made a dent in its rival's popularity. Also, the *Advertiser*'s ability to cause harm to powerful interests in the city was limited. We published maybe half a dozen high-profile news stories each week in the paper. We easily found enough material of community interest to fill the rest. We concentrated on corrupt council officials, bad planning decisions, conmen, and shoplifting local celebrities.

The *Echo* was a very different kind of operation. It published a hundred or so stories each day on all aspects of local life. If it had allowed its journalists the freedom to use their critical faculties about stories that were of no concern to the city's powerful elites, how would it have been able to stop them using the same skills when handling stories that did concern such elites? And just as importantly, how would the newspaper have been able to maintain the pretence of demanding "balanced" and "objective" reporting from its journalists if it so conspicuously applied double standards, depending on whether a story concerned powerful interest groups or not? It would have been clear to even the most blinkered editorial staff member that the paper's professional standards – the freedom to write without interference – had been compromised. Instead, the *Echo*'s reporters learnt to write in a bland and deadening style that made most stories seem either of little or no importance or left the reader terminally confused with a ping-pong of he said-she said. Official sources of information and confirmation were always preferred because they were more "reliable" and "trustworthy". Council officials were always ready and glad to speak to an *Echo* journalist. In other words, success at the newspaper was gauged in terms of obedience to figures of authority, and the ability not to alienate powerful groups within the community. Ambitious journalists learnt to whom they must turn for a comment or a quote, and where "suitable" stories could be found. It was a skill that presumably stayed with them for the rest of their careers. Those who struggled to cope with these strictures were soon found out. They either failed their probationary periods and were forced to move on, or stayed on in the lowliest positions where they could do little harm.

Most young journalists, myself included, were raised on the idea that we had joined a profession that aspired to Woodward and Bernstein-type exposés. We understood, and our profession's own mythologising encouraged such an understanding, that investigative reporting was the purest form of the journalist's craft. In many ways it was the ideal. The investigative reporter is the exception in journalism rather than the model. He or she is the loose cannon whose reports can bring the paper great acclaim but only if the reporter is kept on a tight leash. The honour they bring the paper can equally turn disastrous if the wrong subjects are pursued or the story leads in unpredictable directions that threaten powerful interests. This is why investigative reporters have always been a small and threatened breed and have always been closely scrutinised. Investigative journalism has all but died out nowadays and is largely confined to the Internet.

Professional means servile

Most journalists learn their trade by working on local media with periods of study spent at one of dozens of journalism colleges around the country. Typically, the young journalist is taken on by a newspaper for up to two years on probation (indentures) at very low pay, and the study periods are paid for by the newspaper. During this period, when they are both financially and professionally vulnerable, journalists are taught the main skills: how to structure and write news stories, master shorthand, navigate through the system of local government, and abide by the laws of libel. The newcomer is offered proper employment if he or she passes the exams, shows competency and is considered to have absorbed satisfactorily the constraints described above.

That is actually a departure from the historic view of journalists, which was that they belonged to a trade and that they learnt their craft on the job through what were effectively apprenticeships. Journalists in the nineteenth century understood that they were little different from cabinet-makers: you learnt the

rules of the craft from your elders and then applied them. A journalist worked for a proprietor with a clear political agenda and produced copy in keeping with that agenda. Such journalists were sometimes derogatively referred to as “hacks”. According to Wikipedia, “hack” in this context derives from “hackney”, “a horse that was easy to ride and available for hire.” The proprietor was, of course, the rider.

The press earned its reputation as the Fourth Estate largely because the interests of these newspapers, representing different elite groups, sometimes clashed. In such circumstances, a journalist was briefly able to shine a light on corruption or intrigues in the corridors of power. The most urgent battleground for the press barons, and the financial interests that lay behind them, was the winning of a popular mandate for the corporations to accrete even greater power. The chief tool for sanctioning this agenda would be the media. As part of this concentration of power, the proprietors waged a relentless war against the radical and socialist presses, gradually starving them of advertising until their demise was inevitable. The free sheets of the 1980s would pose a similar threat and be dealt with in much the same way by the established local newspapers.

But there was a catch: once only a few rich individuals exclusively owned the country’s media, the propagandistic nature of their papers’ journalism would be even more evident. After all, the public understood only too well that newspapers were there to serve the interests of their proprietors. This impression needed to be changed if the public were to be successfully pacified in the face of the corporations’ agenda. And so dawned the era of the “professional” media. Journalists were no longer to be seen as tradesmen; they were

“The effect of the media’s lengthy filtering system is identify the best propagandists to promote their corporate values.”

professionals. Their Hippocratic oath was balance, objectivity, neutrality. Unlike their predecessors, they would be trained in academic institutions and could then be trusted to offer only facts in news reports. Opinion would be restricted to the comment pages to give a newspaper “character”. That conveniently explained why there was so little differentiation in the various papers’ coverage or in their selection of news stories.

The campaign of “professionalising” the media was so successful that, after their training, even the journalists believed they were disinterested parties in reporting the news. The selection of certain stories as newsworthy and the further selection of certain facts as relevant to the story had once been understood to be dependent on the biases of the organisation a journalist worked for. Now reporters were made to believe that these arbitrary criteria were inherent in a category of information called ”news”, and that only through their training could journalists recognise these criteria.

No home of the brave

Working on a national is seen as the pinnacle of a professional journalist’s career. Very few make it that far. The competition is fierce and acceptance is slow. As we have seen, there are many stages in the early career of journalists designed to handicap and weed out those who do not conform or who question the framework within which they work. Noam Chomsky refers to this as part of a “filtering” process. Are the nationals different?

For a journalist like myself, who was well trained and had spent several years in the local media, getting a foot in the door of the nationals was relatively easy. Keeping my feet under the desk was far harder. Few recruits are given a job or allowed to write for a paper until they have completed yet another lengthy probationary period.

On national newspapers, this usually means spending considerable time as a sub-editor, a role in which the journalist is slowly acclimatised to the newspaper’s “values”. The sub sits at the bottom of the newspaper’s editorial hierarchy, editing and styling reports as they come in for publication. Above him or her are the section editors (home, foreign etc.), a chief sub-editor (usually an old hand) and a revise sub to check their work. Subs invariably spend years as freelancers or on short-term contracts.

The subs’ primary task is to stop errors of fact and judgement getting into the newspaper. But their own judgement is constantly under scrutiny from editors higher up the hierarchy. If they fail to understand the paper’s “values”, their career is likely to stall on this bottom rung or their contract will not be renewed. If they are to survive long, writers must quickly learn what the news desk expects of them. Newcomers are given a small amount of leeway to adopt angles that are “not suitable”. But they are also expected to learn quickly why such articles are unsuitable and not to propose similar reports again.

The media’s lengthy filtering system means that it is many years before the great majority of journalists get the chance to write with any degree of freedom for a national newspaper, and they must first have proved their “good judgement” many times over to a variety of senior editors. Most have been let go long before they would ever be in a position to influence the paper’s coverage. And that is why high-profile sackings are a great rarity.

Journalists, of course, see this lengthy process of recruitment as necessary to filter for “quality” rather than to remove those who fail to conform or whose reporting threatens powerful elites. The media are supposedly applying professional standards to find those deserving enough to reach the highest ranks of journalism. The effect is that the media identify the best propagandists to promote their corporate values.

Success comes with the herd

The mirroring by newspapers of each other's news agendas is often attributed to human nature, in the form of the herd instinct or the tendency to follow the pack. In truth, this is the way most reporters work out in the field. They attend press conferences, they chase after celebrities together, they speak to the same official spokespeople.

For instance, more than 95 per cent of the reports filed by Britain's distinguished correspondents in Jerusalem originate in stories they have seen published either by the world's two main news agencies, Reuters and Associated Press, or in the local Israeli media. Exclusives are almost unheard of. The correspondent's main job is to rewrite the agency copy by adding his or her own "angle" – usually a minor matter of emphasis in the first paragraphs or an addition of a few quotes from an official contact.

This reliance on the wires is in itself a very effective way of filtering out news that challenges dominant interests. The agencies, dependent for survival on funding from the large media groups, are extremely deferential to the main Western power elites and their allies. This is for two chief reasons: first, large media owners like the Murdoch empire might pull out of the arrangement, or even set up their own rival agency, were Reuters or AP regularly to run stories damaging to their business interests; and second, the agencies, needing to provide reams of copy each day, rely primarily on official sources for their information.

It's not really about readers

How is it then, if this thesis is right, that there are dissenting voices like John Pilger, Robert Fisk, George Monbiot and Seumas Milne who write in the British media while refusing to toe the line?

Note that the above list pretty much exhausts the examples of writers who genuinely and consistently oppose the normal frameworks of journalistic thinking and refuse to join the herd. That means that, in Britain's supposedly left-wing media, we can find one writer working for the Independent (Fisk), one for the New Statesman (Pilger) and two for the Guardian (Milne and Monbiot). Only Fisk, we should further note, writes regular news reports. The rest are given at best weekly columns in which to express their opinions.

However grateful we should be to these dissident writers, their relegation to the margins of the commentary pages of Britain's "left-wing" media serves a useful purpose for corporate interests. It helps define the "character" of the British media as provocative, pluralistic and free-thinking – when, in truth, they are anything but. It is a vital component in maintaining the fiction that a professional media is a diverse media.

It is also probable that the other writers cited above are among the chief reasons readers choose the publications that host them. It is at least possible that, were more such writers allowed on their pages, these papers would grow in popularity. We are never likely to see the hypothesis tested because the so-called left-wing media appear to be in no hurry to take on more dissenting voices.

Finally, it should also be noted that none of these admirable writers, with the exception of Pilger, choose, or are allowed, to write seriously about the dire state of the mainstream media they serve. Sadly, it seems self-evident that were they to do so, they would quickly find their employment terminated.

How, then, do I dare write as I have done here? Simply because I have little to lose. The mainstream media spat me out some time ago. Were it otherwise, I would probably be keeping my silence too.

* *Jonathan Cook* is a British journalist living in Nazareth, Israel. His books include *Blood and Religion* (2006), *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations* (2008) and *Disappearing Palestine* (2008). His website is at www.jkcook.net.

** A longer version of this article can be found at http://www.medialens.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=2860

News Corporation: a profile.

Overview

The story of News Corporation is equally the story of its CEO and founder, Australian-born Rupert Murdoch and his family. News Corp was created from wealth Rupert Murdoch inherited from his father. News Corporation is Murdoch's life, and he runs it with a 'passionate interest'. Richard Searby, Murdoch's school friend and later a director of the company, once said: "Most boards meet to make decisions. News Corp's board meets to ratify Murdoch's." This means Murdoch has an inordinate amount of experience on the companies controlled by the News Corp conglomerate. He visits all of his major operations on a regular basis and continues to find synergies between them. Any of his businesses may play a part in supporting his own or News Corporation's political or commercial influence. Murdoch systematically trades his newspapers' and TV news channels' editorial bias for political favours. Indeed, "most of the critical steps in the transformation of News Limited, the business he inherited, into present day NewsCorp were dependent on such things." (Bruce Page, *How Rupert took on the world*).

By carefully cultivating relationships with national governments, Murdoch has bought ever more influence throughout the English-speaking world and beyond. By doing so, he has, time and again, been able to break down or sidestep media legislation intended to prevent the emergence of media barons such as himself. Ultimately, and in spite of his evident right-wing leanings, Murdoch is a political pragmatist who "moves effortlessly between Republicans and Democrats, Tories and Labourites, capitalists and communists, depending on what deals are cooking." (Russ Baker, *Colombia Journalism Review*).

Murdoch has increasingly supported the US Republican party since 2009, for example donating US$1m in 2010 for the mid-term election campaign. In the 1980s, News International was able to flout UK law to gain a monopoly in the British TV and Newspaper markets. As a result, News Corp is close to the UK Conservative Party and, in 2010, praised Thatcher's "contribution to the British economy."

News Corp's Fox News and its British companies often have a racist, anti-immigration, thread running through their coverage. This media bias has a symbiotic relationship with the increasing racism of immigration policies. The racist bias of the corporate media, much of which is controlled by News Corp, justifies and facilitates new anti-migrant policies. In 2010, Fox News denied the company had an anti-immigration stance.

Perhaps because of Murdoch's dominance over News Corp, the company tends to make long-term, often risky, investments that many boards of directors might balk at. News Corp will use whatever means are necessary to force its way into a marketplace, and will run its companies at a loss for years in order to build up a dominant market share and eventual profitability. News Corp has operated with the riskiest possible financing, narrowly avoiding collapse in 1990, and has continued to expand, mostly through acquisitions. Its aggressive business tactics are legendary, and it shows no mercy to its rivals. The company's financial structure has developed into a labyrinth of holding companies, many in offshore tax havens, enabling it to pay astoundingly low taxes.

Industry area(s)

News Corporation is a conglomerate, describing itself as a "constellation of media businesses." These include the production and distribution of motion pictures and television programming; television, satellite and cable broadcasting; the publication of newspapers, magazines and books; the production and distribution of promotional and advertising products and services; and the development of digital broadcasting. News Corporation also has miscellaneous business interests, including a few major sports teams.

More than any other media company, News Corp has achieved hegemony over a large proportion of the world's corporate media. Companies owned by News Corporation include Fox News (USA), ITV (UK), Star TV (Hong Kong, Asia's largest broadcaster), the New York Times (US), BSkyB (UK), Dow Jones/Wall Street Journal (US), 20th Century Fox (US), The Sun (UK), News of the World (UK), The Times and the Sunday Times (UK), Sky (Multinational), Israel 10 (Israel), and Myspace. For a full list, see cjr.org/tools/owners/newscorp.asp.

Company type: Conglomerate, Publicly Traded
Listings: NASDAQ, Australian Securities Exchange
Revenue: US$33 billion (2010)
Assets: US$54 billion (2010)

Market share

News Corporation is one of the world's largest media companies with total assets of approximately US$54bn in 2010, and total annual revenues of up to US$33bn. News Corp's assets exceed the gross

domestic product of the majority of African countries.

According to its website, News Corporation is the "world's leading publisher of English-language newspapers, with operations in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the US. The Company publishes more than 175 different newspapers, employing approximately 15,000 people worldwide and printing more than 40 million papers a week."

In the television and film industries, News Corp owns both a large number of content providers (such as Fox Television in the US) and extensive distribution networks (Fox Cable in the US, BSkyB in Europe and Star TV in Asia). In total, the group comprises around 800 companies around the world, with many holding companies based in offshore tax havens.

History

Murdoch obtained his first newspaper, *The Adelaide News*, by inheritance when his father died in 1952. He was at the time still an undergraduate at Worcester College, University of Oxford. In 1953, he returned to Australia and assumed control of the paper, rapidly improving its fortunes. By the end of the decade, he had acquired a New South Wales-based newspaper chain, Cumberland Newspapers, the Sydney *Daily Mirror* and Melbourne and Brisbane's *Truth*. 1964 saw him buy a stake in Wellington Publishing, New Zealand's largest media company.

Murdoch returned to the UK in the late 1960s, beating arch-rival Robert Maxwell to the *News of the World* (1968) and *The Sun* (1969). In 1973, he entered the US news market, taking over the *San Antonio Express News*, following up, three years later, with the *New York Post*, the *Village Voice* and *New York Magazine*. A string of further titles were acquired or bought during the 1970s in the US and Australia and, in 1980, he established News Corporation as a global holding company.

In 1981, News Corp bought *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* from the Thomson Group. A sympathetic Thatcher government allowed him to exploit a monopolies law loophole to buy the papers. The 1980s brought more landmarks: Murdoch taking American citizenship in order to be able to operate North American TV networks, acquiring 20th Century Fox (1985); buying the *South China Morning Post* and Harper & Row publishers (1987); and the launch of Sky (1989).

By 1990, News Corp was in deep financial trouble with vast debts. Insolvency was narrowly avoided by a matter of hours. Nonetheless, the media empire went on with its continual expansion, buying £300m broadcasting rights to the Premier League (1992); Asian satellite broadcaster Star Television (1993); LA Dodgers baseball team (1997); and 10 further US TV stations (2000). More recently, News Corp has gained a foothold in mainland Europe. After settling a law suit filed against subsidiary NDS, the corporation bought a share in Italian network Telepiu (2002), which was then renamed Sky Italia (2003). Since 2000, James Murdoch, Rupert's son, has taken over much of the running of News Corp.

In 2005, News Corporation purchased social networking site *Myspace* for $580m. Ironically, Murdoch claimed at the time of the sale that "young people... want control over their media, instead of being controlled by it." Since then the company has tried to increase its grasp on the digital media marketplace. In 2008, it also announced plans to charge for some of its online content, gradually putting its newspapers behind 'paywalls'.

In 2006, attracted by the advertising profits made by the *Metro*, the UK's free daily newspaper owned by Associated Newspapers (AN), News International launched *The London Paper*, an evening free paper distributed in the capital. Two weeks before its launch, AN launched *London Lite* in an attempt to spoil News Corp's market. *The London Paper* itself was intended as spoiler against AN's *Evening Standard*. In 2009, *The London Paper* was closed after loosing millions in the competition.

In 2007, *News of the World*'s royal affairs editor Clive Goodman and private investigator Glenn Mulcaire were jailed after admitting hacking into the phone messages of royal staff. The paper originally said the hacking was a one-off but it soon emerged that several public figures, including cabinet ministers, sports figures, London's mayor Boris Johnson and publicist Max Clifford had all had their phones hacked. In February 2010, a Parliamentary Select Committee concluded that "News International... sought to conceal the truth about what really occurred."

Andy Coulson, editor of *News of the World* until his resignation in 2007 in the wake of the hacking scandal, became Director of Communications for the British Conservative Party until he suddenly resigned in late January 2011. After a 2010 *New York Times* report on the extent of the hacking, and Coulson's knowledge of it, enquiries have been reopened. Witnesses may be compelled to give evidence before a parliamentary committee.

For a more detailed time line of News Corporation and Murdoch, see www.ketupa.net/murdoch2.htm.

Resistance

Rupert Murdoch and News Corp have become synonymous with the corporate media; media outlets telling the story of capitalism and corporations rather than that real news of concern to ordinary people and local communities. Countless subvertised versions of Murdoch papers have been produced, such as *The Spun* and *The Scum*, seeking to expose the corporate bias in Murdoch's papers.

In 1986, rather than negotiate with unhappy print workers, News International set up a new printing plant in Wapping and enlisted a scab union, EEPTU, as an alternative workforce. This led to a major confrontation drawing solidarity from the wider worker's movement. The 13-month long picket of the Wapping depot was the scene of mass demonstrations, arson attacks and developed into nightly battles with the police. News International depots and TNT scab vehicles became targets nationwide. A boycott of *The Sun*, *News of the World*, *The Times* and *Sunday Times* was urged. New laws brought in by the conservative government following the miners' strike allowed the sequestration of union funds. The funds of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (SOGAT) were thus duly seized.

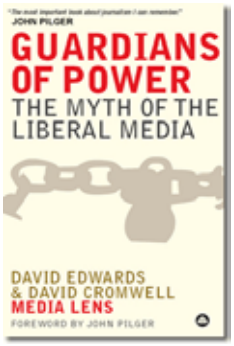
Wapping underwent a veritable occupation by the police, urged on by the Thatcher government to break the strike, and many local residents were effectively restricted from travelling in their own neighbourhood. In total, 1,262 arrests were made. Murdoch attempted to pass off the dispute, resulting in the dismissal of 5,500 workers, as a result of introducing new printing technology and an attempt to break the collective power of workers.

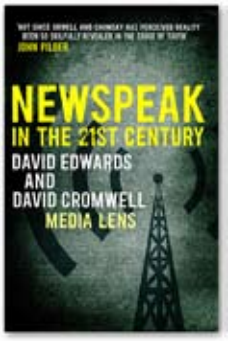
In 1986, a 4-page spoof of *The Sun* was produced by anarchists in support of the News International printers strike at Wapping. The spoof's frontpage headline was 'Murdoch fucks donkeys'. Other publications, such as Picket and The Wapping Post were produced by the striking printers and their supporters.

The Wapping strike was was immortalised in a comic strip/spoof paper titled *The Scum.* Other spoofs of *The Sun* included *The Spun*, a 24-page spoof by anonymous anti-war activists highlighting the pro-war bias of the Murdoch papers (see the spoofs article in this issue for more details). The Sun was, and still is, one of the worst war-mongering British tabloids, supporting the UK's military adventures and the 'war on terror'.

In 1989, 96 football fans were crushed to death at the Hillsborough Stadium. News Corp's *The Sun*, after off-the-record briefings from South Yorkshire Police, blamed the disaster on the fans in an article entitled 'The Truth'. The paper published unattributed allegations, such as stories of Liverpool fans pickpocketing crush victims, as facts. The result was a popular boycott of paper, which lasted for many years. *The Sun*'s editor Kelvin Mackenzie apologised in 1993 but later retracted his apology.

MediaLens





MediaLens is a media-monitoring project, or campaign, that grew out of a frustration with the unwillingness, or inability, of the mainstream media to tell the truth about the real causes and extent of many of the problems facing us, such as human rights abuses, poverty, pollution and climate change. In this interview, we ask its editors, ***David Edwards and David Cromwell****, about their work, successes and the challenges they face.*

- Why did you start MediaLens?

The media presents itself as a neutral window on the world. We are to believe that the view we see through that window is 'the world as it is.' It's "all the news that's fit to print" because "comment is free but facts are sacred" - what's to challenge? When you take a closer look at that 'window', you realise it's not a window on the world at all; it's a kind of *painting* of a window on the world. And the 'painting' has been carefully produced using colours, textures and forms all selected by the corporate arm of a media system that has very clear interests, goals and biases. And guess what? The one issue the media will *not* discuss is the idea that it is not providing a neutral window on the world. That subject is taboo and it is at the root of every deception promoting war, destruction of the climate, and the general subordination of people and planet to profit. It has to be challenged. It is amazing to us that so few people are doing so.

Two of us, David Edwards and David Cromwell, had had similar experiences as freelance writers in the 1990s trying to place challenging, critical articles, book reviews and suchlike in newspapers and magazines. It quickly became clear that there were invisible boundaries on what was acceptable - you revealed your sympathy for Pilger and Chomsky at your peril, for example. But even before then, going back to the 1980s, we had both seen for ourselves how the corporate media obscured the root causes of climate change, corporate-led consumerism, exploitation of people and natural resources, and huge disparities in power in society. As well as these personal experiences of the media, reading books like *Manufacturing Consent* by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky gave us a thorough understanding of why the corporate media performs the way it does.

The idea to try and do something practical about all of this came about when the both of us were having a chat in a pub one evening in 2001. We'd been wondering why there seemed to be no group in this country that was like Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), the US-based media watch project. We were aware of the Glasgow Media Group and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, amongst others. But it seemed odd to us that nobody seemed to be producing regular critiques of corporate media output in the UK.

DC had just recently started a modest website, private-planet.com, to promote his book, *Private Planet*, published in 2001. DE suggested that we start a similar website for a new media project, together with an email list to send out media 'alerts' in which we would hold up news stories for public scrutiny. A friend put us in touch with a webmaster and, by July 2001, we were sending media alerts.

Initially we just planned to send alerts, or even just quotes and comments, to a few friends and contacts. But interest developed quite rapidly and we gained a wider audience when John Pilger mentioned our work several times in the *New Statesman*. Pilger has been a great friend, inspiration and supporter. He also wrote the foreword to our first book, *Guardians Of Power: The Myth Of the Liberal Media* (Pluto Press, 2006).

- What were you trying to achieve?

We didn't want to simply undertake a dry, academic exercise in media 'analysis'. We wanted to be as uncompromising as possible; to write without fear of alienating editors, reviewers, friendly journalists and so on. The hope was to expose structural problems in the media by revealing some hidden truths about key issues reported in the media.

The ideal media alert takes an issue that is very much 'in the air', so that people are extremely familiar with the media coverage. We then offer opinions, sources and analysis that have been excluded from this coverage. People can then compare the corporate version (which should be fresh in their minds) with what we're saying (Have these arguments been excluded? Should they be covered?) and then make up their minds on whether there is any merit in what we're saying.

Someone wrote to us recently saying, "It's amazing how a newspaper article can be totally biased and yet seem quite balanced." It really is amazing. We're trying to tease apart the fibres of newspaper reporting to show how it manages this illusion. For example, we show how supposedly neutral journalists say one thing when reporting the actions of 'friendly' governments and say something completely different when reporting the actions of official 'enemies'.

- Do you see the project as journalistic or campaigning work?

Good journalism *is* campaigning work. On one side are the torturers, on the other side the tortured. Journalists who claim to stand neutrally between the two are idiots

or cynics. It is not just bad journalism to behave as though the suffering of others were someone else's problem; it is inhuman.

- In your 10 years of existence, have you had any success in "correcting the distorted version of the corporate media"? Can you give us some examples of success stories?

In fact we don't say that we are "correcting" the corporate media; we aspire to correct *for* their distorted vision, like lenses in a pair of glasses. We're tentatively offering what seems to be more or less accurate and reasonable to us, but we have no sense that what we are arguing is absolutely true.

"The Guardian, like the rest of 'the liberal media', is complicit in war crimes and looming climate chaos."

There are numerous examples of journalists changing their online articles, interviewing angles and so on in response to the thousands of emails sent to them by us and innumerable media activists. The real success is that dozens, sometimes hundreds, even thousands, of people are challenging journalists from a left perspective without any prompting from us. If we helped encourage that trend, then that's tremendous. It has always been our key goal.

- Can you give some examples of 'failure' stories, where your work didn't make the desired impact? Any lessons to be learnt from that, for example about the nature of corporate media?

You could probably cite every issue we've covered. The corporate media has patterns of performance rooted in deep corporate, political and other social conditions. So our 'desired impact' is really to point this out.

- Why 'correct' corporate media rather than provide an independent, alternative media outlet? It could be argued that by making them more cautious, you effectively make them stronger or more efficient in their game.

We highlight the systemic failings of the corporate media while fully supporting the development of independent, alternative media outlets; the two are not mutually exclusive. But we have always been very clear that genuinely independent media cannot arise in a vacuum. It will take radical, grassroot changes throughout society to allow such media to flourish and become the norm.

More fundamentally, our problem is not the mainstream media; it's the influence of greed, hatred and ignorance on human and animal welfare. You could argue that successfully encouraging a bloody tyrant to be less bloody makes him stronger. But what you've made stronger is a tyrant rather than a bloody tyrant. You can then work to change the tyranny itself - make the tyrant 'stronger' by making him democratic, and so on... You have to do what you can to nudge society into less violent, more rational directions.

- You recently had a funding application rejected by a big 'progressive' trust because some trustees were "not convinced by the strategy of targeting the liberal media." Many liberals would probably share that criticism. Can you explain why this focus on the so-called liberal media?

Few expect the likes of *The Times* or the *Telegraph* to challenge the establishment seriously and relentlessly; far less the tabloid press. But what about the so-called 'liberal media'? Many people on the left, and in green circles, believe that the *Guardian*, for example, should be regarded almost as an ally. It is, after all, seen by some as a kind of flagship newspaper of the environment movement. Tony Juniper, then director of Friends of the Earth, once said: "It is difficult to overestimate the impact of the Guardian and Observer. The Guardian is certainly considered the voice of progressive and sound environmental thinking both in the UK and in Europe." (Ian Mayes, 'Flying in the face of the facts', *The Guardian*, January 24, 2004).

But the *Guardian*, like the rest of 'the liberal media', is complicit in war crimes and looming climate chaos. We've documented this in several books and many media alerts. The Guardian as an idea - as a benevolent, well-intentioned, basically liberal friend - is wonderful. But when you look at what the *Guardian* actually writes about the key issues that matter, it is really shocking. Over the past decade of Media Lens, we have become ever more convinced that the so-called 'best media' like the *Guardian* – and the *BBC*, the *Observer*, *Channel 4 News*, the *Independent* and so on - need to be constantly exposed for their systemic failings.

If the right-wing, warmongering media are saying "North Korea sank the Cheonan and should be bombed" and the liberal media are saying "North Korea sank the Cheonan but should be attacked with sanctions, not bombs", the public has literally no mainstream access to the argument that North Korea might *not* have sunk the Cheonan. You can take an infinite number of examples. So, say the right-wing press says it was right to invade Iraq because Saddam Hussein was a lethal tyrant. Then the liberal press says the invasion was "a mistake". That means there is no-one saying the war was an appalling war crime.

- Compared with the US, where they have FAIR, ZNet and other similar projects, MediaLens is just about the only media monitoring group in the UK, and is quite small compared to its American counterparts. Why is that in your opinion?

US thought control works more by excluding dissident voices; UK thought control works more by including them in a way that effectively vaccinates the public mind against the idea that honest voices are excluded. So we've got Robert Fisk, George Monbiot, Seumas Milne and John Pilger, but these are fig leaves, as Pilger has himself acknowledged; small islands of radicalism swamped by the output of the innumerable "journalists of attachment" that surround them. Remember, most media output is utter nonsense anyway, pure attainment and tabloid distraction - hardly anyone has even heard of John Pilger or Robert Fisk. Liberal intellectuals know about them and wrongly think their inclusion is impressive evidence indicating that we have a free, open, inclusive media system.

There is no essential reason why the UK should not have a strong base of progressive activism. Dissent in this country has a very long history. It may well have been partially suppressed under a system of propaganda and brainwashing that intensified under Thatcherism and New Labour. But the anti-war activism that saw mass demonstrations up to the launch of the Iraq war in 2003 shows that latent resistance can quickly become visible and very active. To maintain and build upon it, though, will require greater cooperation among groups and greater efforts to connect with the population at large. We feel strongly that that can best be achieved, not by focusing on dry, cold analysis or anger or frustration, but on people's innate capacity for compassion, critical awareness and hope.

are radical, collective, independent media projects still possible?

With the aim of exploring the present pitfalls, and potential future directions, of radical, anti-corporate media projects, Corporate Watch have put three virtual Independent Media Centre (Indymedia) volunteers (IMCers) into a virtual pub, i.e. an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) room names 'pub', to see what our imaginations could produce.

Our three characters are 'T', a techie who, years ago, helped build one of the open-source content management systems (CMS) that many Indymedia sites still run on; 'M', who helped moderate the UK news wire and write middle-column features for years before burning out; and 'F', an independent photographer and film maker who used to contribute frequent action and protest reports before getting a paid job and setting up his own blog. Here is the log of their half-drunken chat.

T: Hello F. We were just talking about the problems and dead ends that Indymedia and other independent media projects are facing in the age of blogs and the so-called 'information society'.

M: The main points that we mentioned are the lack of resources: slow development compared to corporate technology: political and personal disagreements: and, above all, what seems to be a decline in these projects' relevance to grassroots movements, which seem to prefer using, for one reason or another, other more readily available platforms provided by evil corporates like Youtube and Facebook.

M: And I was saying that both Indymedia and the IT world have changed so much that different people seem to want different things from the project. I have often noticed that people mean different things when they say 'Indymedia'.

T: But we were trying not to limit the discussion to Indymedia, as many similar, though smaller, projects are struggling with the same issues. We are, rather, using Indymedia as an example.

F: So what do you think makes an independent, grassroots media project different from a blog or any other news site?

M: Well, first, the politics behind it: grassroots, anti-authoritarian, , horizontally organised and all the rest of it, which you cannot really reconcile with corporate platforms if you are to keep some integrity. Then there is open publishing, which was quite a revolutionary thing at the time, but nowadays setting up a blog or website without much technical knowledge is available everywhere. However, OP is more than that: it is the ability to post content anonymously and securely, which most of these corporate platforms don't provide.

T: Yes, when we started Indymedia, everyone understood that 'our media' included establishing our own infrastructure (servers etc.) and all the other means of production, material and non-material. Today's 'media activists' seem to be happy to be consumers, however radical the content of their consumption might be.

F: I would add the collective, collaborative way of working. From my experience, blogs have managed to individualise collective media activism and fragment collective political identities.

M: But I also think that Indymedia and similar projects have bred a generation of 'media activists', as opposed to activists doing their own media. And F here is one example :-). I would argue against professionalisation, however radical.

F: Yeah, I admit that's true. It's quite disheartening to see more cameras, often standing to the side, than actual protesters on demos and actions.

T: Also, I don't know if we can call it a problem, but the reality is that Indymedia has grown so much, with various projects that have quite different approaches and internal logic kept under the same umbrella. I wonder if this line of thinking (one CMS for everything) has been part of the problem.

F: The supermarket logic :-)

M: I would disagree actually. I think the brand, or identity if you like, is also important to the credibility and continuity of projects.

T: Yes, but there is no reason why we can't separate various sub-projects, technically speaking, and keep the brand name for all of them. The open source movement is a good example of things developing much quicker and better if you don't attempt to control everything.

F: True.

M: The other problem, in my opinion, is the unanticipated challenges that open publishing posed or created: trolling, disinformation, security risks and so on. Also, if open publishing has worked well for sourcing news directly from the street, it doesn't seem to have worked for features and other more laborious tasks – as you know, Indymedia features are often wholly written by one single IMCer, without involvement from others, even to fix typos.

F: Yeah, we haven't really worked hard on promoting the collective collaborative production of media, the way Wikipedia has done, for example. And I'm not only talking about dedicated IMC volunteers, but about the wider audience, given that one of Indymedia's missions was to overcome the division between the reporter and reported.

T: God, this is so depressing.

M: Yeah..

F: Perhaps we should talk about solutions? Even if they may seem unrealistic for now...

T: What I would like to see on Indymedia is more local and community news from a grassroots perspective. Action reports and covering big mobilisations are not enough any more. If we really want to be a serious alternative to the mainstream media, we have to break out of this activist bubble.

F: An alternative, grassroots, open-publishing news agency :-)

T: Exactly!

M: What I would like to see is more collective production of different types of media. Imagine if people could easily upload video, audio and text reports from their mobile phones etc., which would then be pooled and put together into comprehensive pieces.

T: And allowing people to edit audio and video pieces or features online... Provided that we find a solution to potential abuses and security risks.

F: Obviously these things need us all to put our forces together to realise them, rather than us sitting here and dreaming. It's always easier said than done, innit?

Corporate Watch presents... the DIY research contest 2011

In our ever-determined efforts to seek and destroy corporate power in all its manifestations, Corporate Watch is turning to you, our ever-determined readers, to become our ever-determined contributors. Corporate Watch is on the look out for DIY researchers close on the heels of destructive corporations: Here's your opportunity to submit your work into a brand new DIY research competition and win **publication** on the Corporate Watch website and/or magazine, and a free **book of your choice** from Freedom bookshop. There's everything to play for!

COMPANY PROFILE

Company profiles should be structured around these key sections: overview of the company; industry areas; market share; who, where, how much; history; corporate crimes; resistance.

For examples of company profiles, see the Corporate Watch website: http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=402

Word limit: 3,000

CORPORATE PROFILE CASE STUDY

Research into the impact of corporate power and influence on a particular geographical place or industry sector. Themes to explore include undue influence on politicians and public authorities, lobbying, corruption, revolving doors and so on.

Word limit: 2,000

ARTICLE ON CORPORATE CRIME

Research into where a corporate has broken, or has potentially broken, civil or criminal law, as a result of deliberate decisions or actions which were focused on expanding or continuing their core business and benefiting the corporation itself. This can be direct or indirect, by being complicit in these crimes. Corporate crimes include war crime, safety crime, financial crime, crimes against the consumer and so on.

Word limit: 1,000

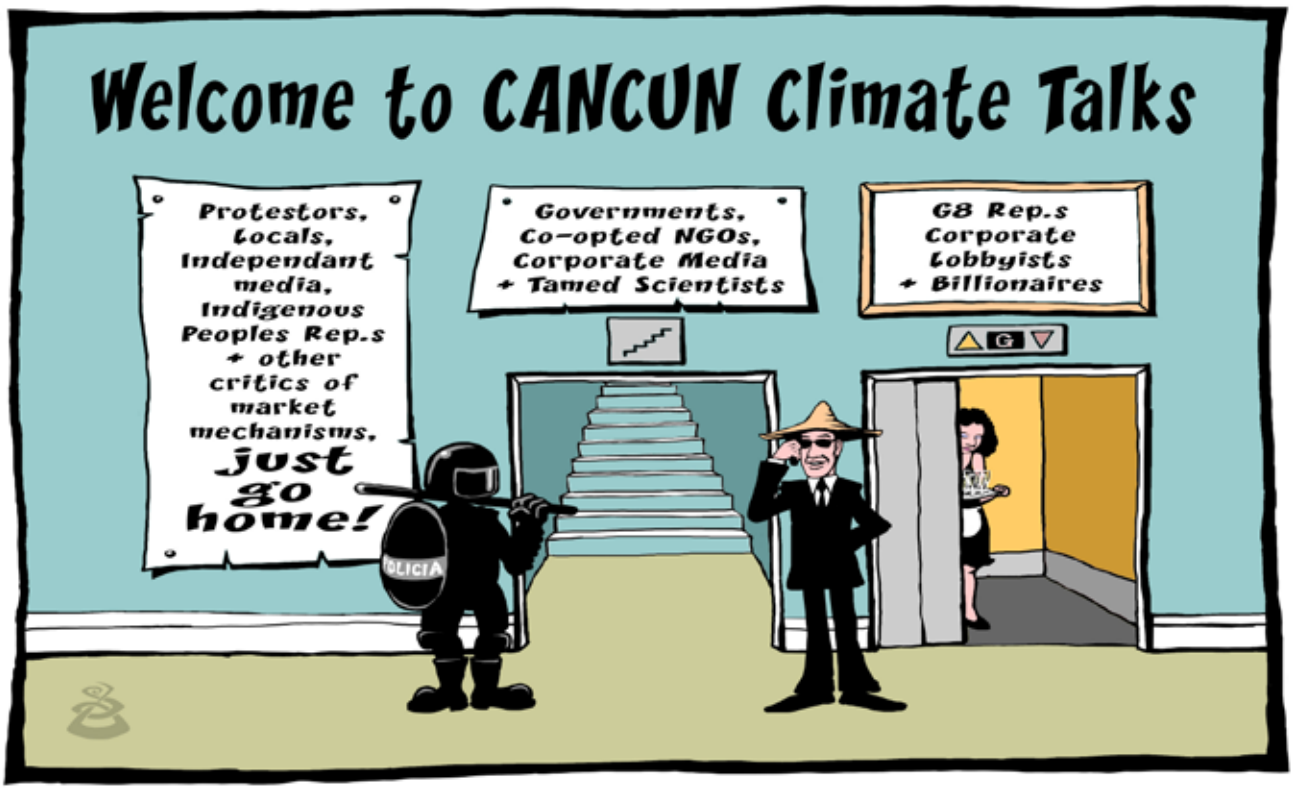
PRACTICAL DETAILS

All submissions must **original** and **well referenced**, clearly disclosing sources using footnotes or endnotes.

Compete submissions will be judged by an eminent panel made up of Corporate Watch members and independent researchers, journalists and others from outside the co-op.

Submissions should not exceed the word limit stipulated for each strand, but you are welcome to submit pieces for more than one strand.

The deadline for submissions is **30 April 2011**.
Please send your submission to: contact@corporatewatch.org.



Hooray!
We have a global deal!

If only mainstream media coverage, or the lack of it, would stop for one second and peep behind the palpable relief displayed by environment ministers that the UNFCCC show is still on the road following the COP16 climate negotiations in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010. To be discovered are the same corporate-influenced, market-based mechanisms that have been failing to fight climate change ever since the Kyoto Protocol was first signed in 1997. Take the example of Carbon Capture and Storage projects (CCS), which are now permitted as offset-credit generating projects under the UN Clean Development Mechanism. CCS was deemed to be a "relevant technology" to the "attainment of the ultimate goal" of stopping climate change. So, a failing mechanism that provides ample opportunity for corruption, and credits that permit multinational corporations to continue emitting in their core business, will now also provide added legitimacy, investment and testing ground for CCS. That is providing the technology can be deployed in an "environmentally safe" way that avoids carbon "seepage"; so an unproven technological excuse for the burning of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, is included in the global mechanism designed to stop runaway climate change. Great.

The unpublic inquiry into the public bank

As holders of 84% of the Royal Bank of Scotland's (RBS) shares, you would think the public (or the government, rather) would be entitled to read the Financial Services Authority's (FSA) inquiry, which concluded on 2nd December that no "instances of fraud or dishonest activity" have been identified at the failed bank. RBS executives were merely, according to Lord Turner, the head of the FSA, "doing what executives and boards in other sectors of the economy do: sometimes getting judgements right and sometimes wrong." That 'getting it wrong' meant the largest corporate losses in UK history, contributing to bring down the global economy and causing a massive recession, seems irrelevant. How this does not equate to 'governance failings' is unclear, but that lack of clarity is, according to the FSA, just something we'll all have to get used to: confidentially legislation means the regulator is unable to publish the findings. Well, we wouldn't want to overturn the matrix of laws protecting corporations, and the financial sector in particular, from acting with impunity without fear of comeuppance now, would we? Oh, hang on, it's all OK now: Lord Turner has promised a brief report (though not a "detailed blow-by-blow account") outlining the key events in the run-up to the bank's near-collapse and its bail-out by the government. The FSA just need RBS's agreement, which the bank is currently withholding, to proceed.

RBS
The Royal Bank of Scotland

Rent a cop

Police are leading the way in responses to the UK public spending cuts: bringing in the private sector, just as the coalition government would want. A conference sponsored by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in January 2011 aimed to create "intelligent [seriously?!] and carefully crafted relationships between the police and industry." The programme includes a "strategy panel of police leaders and industry" focusing on IT, custody, command and control, call handling, air support, forensics and the police estate. Legislation appears to remain a "formidable obstacle" to the privatisation of policing, so expect that to change soon. But have no fear, this gathering of luminaries thankfully includes **"**serious contributions" from Sir David Omand, a senior civil servant who apparently "now thinks deeply about business strategy." We can't help but wonder whether Omand was 'thinking deeply' when he recommended to Jack Straw and Tony Blair that John Scarlett, author of the infamous Iraq WMD dossier, head up MI6, or when he helped decide that David Kelly must be pursued for talking to the media about the 'dodgy dossier'

Portaloo shortage in 2012

Glastonbury Festival supremo Michael Eavis has denied reports that the festival is taking a break in 2012 because the London Olympics will cause a shortage of portable lavatories (portaloos). He did admit, however, that the Olympics played a part in his decision to make 2012 one of the festival's regular rest years, due to the police being over-stretched. But it remains likely that a distinct lack of portaloos may have been a contributing factor in the decision, given that portaloos are only provided by four suppliers and that 2012 would be a toilet-supplier's dream year, with piss prices inevitably being pushed up.

challenging British aid in India: new book and films

The coalition government's decision to increase the budget of the Department for International Development (DFID) has been presented as a progressive counterpoint to the massive cuts in other government departments. The Tories have praised much of the DFID's work under New Labour and have committed to increase the amount of aid given, saying it is "motivated by a shared determination to erode the terrible inequalities of opportunity that we see around the world today." But many of the so-called beneficiaries of British aid do not see it as progressive at all, arguing that it is based on the same free market principles as the rest of the coalition's policies and is doing more harm than good.

Between 2003 and 2008, India received £1 billion of British aid. At the beginning of 2009, the DFID released its new country strategy for India, which committed to giving another £850 million until 2011, making it DFID's largest bilateral programme. India is the world's fourth largest economy, based on purchasing power, and has qualified as a middle-income country since 2007. India is now also an aid donor in its own right.

In a ground-breaking book and DVD of short films and transcribed interviews by Richard Whittell and Eshwarappa M, published by Corporate Watch this month, people affected by British aid argue that behind the pictures of smiling children and the rhetoric of development lies a different reality that seldom makes the news headlines. They say that, through DFID projects and programmes, their government, land, schools and public services are being taken away from them. As one of the interviewees puts it, "In India, the DFID ... [is] behind the push to completely dismantle public systems of health, education, food security, water, electricity, and throw our people completely to the mercy of markets controlled by big capital." According to another interviewee, it is "another agenda to colonise us."

In 10 lengthy transcribed interviews and five short films, people who have suffered from and fought against the DFID's aid programmes in India - including teachers, farmers, academics, activists, engineers and journalists – explain why they have resisted or rejected this 'dodgy development' and why it is important that people in Britain do the same.

"They tie you up and burgle your house through the back door," says one of the interviewees, Madhuri Krishnaswammy. "And then arrive at the front door with much fanfare to provide a few sops as 'relief'!"
"Assistance doesn't mean purchasing my culture," says another interviewee, Abani Baral. "Assistance doesn't mean encroaching upon my rights or the administration. This is what the DFID is doing and this is what we are opposed to."

Professor Anil Sadgopal makes an appeal to the British public and asks, "Would you allow this to be done in your country by the Indian government? If your answer is no, then please use all your resources ... to stop DFID."

As well as the UK, the book and DVD will be distributed in India and other countries that receive British aid, such as Ghana and Iraq, to people similarly affected by it. Neither the films makers nor the publishers have received any funding for the project, and will make no profit from it.

"We travelled across India, independently and without funding," says Richard Whittell and Eshwarappa M, who conducted the interviews and made the films. "We wanted to speak to people affected by British aid. It soon became clear that there was a substantial number of people whose experiences of this aid contrasted sharply with the DFID's publicity, and it is these critical views that are presented in these short films and interviews."

Kofi Mawuli Klu, from Ghana, who wrote the foreword, adds that this series "will go a long way in raising awareness, forewarning people [about the DFID and British aid] and sharing the examples of community resistance among like-minded people all over the world. It will become dynamite."

The UK International Development parliamentary committee has recently announced an inquiry into the future of DFID's programme in India. A memorandum based on this work has been submitted to the committee. The coalition government has said the DFID's work will continue in a similar direction as it did under New Labour, though 'more efficient' and even more pro-business.
The British government gives £7 billion a year to poorer countries to "fight poverty worldwide." This money is given through the DFID, established in 1997 by the newly elected Labour government to focus exclusively on eliminating world poverty, which the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair described as "the greatest moral challenge facing our generation." As of July 2010, the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government has committed to maintaining

the DFID as a separate department, with David Cameron promising that "even in these difficult times we will meet our commitment to increase spending on aid to 0.7% of gross national income from 2013."

If you would like to buy a copy of the book and dvd, please visit our shop at www.babyloniantimes.co.uk


FREE
LONDON
Shit
Bla bla

Corporate Watch

corporate critical research since 1996

www.corporatewatch.org