

**Granville Williams** on the motives for the anti-union attacks in the Tory press

## Vicious union bashing is back again

There was remarkable unanimity on the front pages of national newspapers on Friday 18 March. With the exception of *The Times* every one of them led on the shock news that DP World, a global logistics group based in Dubai, had the day before abruptly fired 800 seafarers working on P&O Ferries.

The papers all strongly condemned DP World's action.

How times change! Fast forward to the week of industrial action by the RMT, and the right-wing Tory press acted as an echo chamber promoting the government's own political agenda. Transport minister Grant Shapps refused to intervene in the rail dispute because the government's strategy was to use the strike to whip up public anger to deflect people's attention from the government's own abysmal failings over rocketing energy costs and soaring food prices.

What we saw being played out was a crude attempt to resurrect the images and stories Thatcher and the right-wing press deployed during the 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79 (see the centre-page spread by Nick Jones on coverage of the RMT).

Derek Jameson, editor of

Front pages of national newspapers whip up hostility towards trade unions and attack Labour leader, Keir Starmer



the *Daily Express* at the time, admitted in coverage of 1978-79 industrial action: "We pulled every dirty trick in the book; we made it look like it was general, universal and eternal when it was in reality scattered, here and there, and no great problem."

And yet the memories remain potent, to be dredged up as trade unionists, after a decade of zero or below inflation wages rises, vote to take action. In the



weekend papers, as the TUC organised a march in London on 18 June to demand action on the cost of living, we saw deranged examples of vicious anti-union coverage in the Tory press clearly synchronised to support the government anti-union attack.

One of the most blatant examples of this was the *Sunday Telegraph* front-page story,

with Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng accusing trade union leaders of bribing workers to go on strike. He said the figures showed that 'militant trade unions' had been quietly amassing reserves in order to unleash a summer of chaos this year.

He said: "It's clear they've been plotting this for some time. Looking at the figures, this plan of theirs is designed to inflict maximum damage

on millions of people for as long as possible."

As a Unite spokesman said, "The idea that this is part of some massive, co-ordinated union plot is the stuff of fantasy."

Press coverage of industrial action underlines yet again the basic point that 'freedom of the press' means the freedom of their billionaire owners to pump out poisonous propaganda.



**EDITORIAL**

## A chilling message to the media

**O**n Friday 17 June the Home Secretary Priti Patel formally approved the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the United States to face espionage charges, a decision that human rights groups condemned as a dire threat to journalism worldwide.

In a shameful move Patel insisted that the publisher's extradition to the U.S. would not be 'incompatible with his human rights, including his right to a fair trial and to freedom of expression'.

Stella Assange, the WikiLeaks founder's wife, said that the U.K. government has 'approved sending Julian Assange to the country that plotted his assassination', referring to reports that the CIA—then under the leadership of Mike Pompeo—considered kidnapping or killing the journalist, who published classified information that exposed U.S. war crimes.

In a statement responding to Patel's decision, WikiLeaks said, "This is a dark day for press freedom and for British democracy."

"Anyone in this country who cares about freedom of expression should be deeply ashamed," the organisation continued. "Julian did nothing wrong. He has committed no crime and is not a criminal. He is a journalist and a publisher, and he is being punished for doing his job."

WikiLeaks added, "Today is not the end of the fight. It is only the beginning of a new legal battle. We will appeal through the legal system. The next appeal will be before the High Court. We will fight louder and harder on the streets, we will organise, and we will make Julian's story known to all."

— **Granville Williams**

UK's creative workforce unions warn Nadine Dorries

## Selling off Channel 4 will damage UK broadcasting

**I**t still feels unreal that Nadine Dorries as culture secretary is in a position to disrupt and weaken vital cultural institutions like the BBC and Channel 4. Some commentators are hoping Boris Johnson will destroy himself and his cronies before any more damage is done. Let's hope so.

Meanwhile, it is the clear and present danger of the privatisation of Channel 4 which we still need to focus on. For people who want to get up to speed on why we should oppose this destructive policy, the Federation of Entertainment Unions (Bectu, Equity,

NUJ, Musicians' Union, Writers Guild of Great Britain) has given us the key facts. They are in a two-page letter sent to the Culture Secretary on 13 June.

The letter opens, "As unions representing the UK's creative workforce, we strongly oppose this decision and urge you to reconsider the sale of a much-loved, highly successful cultural asset."

The bulk of the text is packed with facts and examples showing why the privatisation proposal is so foolhardy, and concludes, "We are deeply concerned that the sale of such

a profitable network that gives so much to the UK's broadcasting and independent production sector will have major consequences for the UK broadcasting landscape.

Channel 4 costs the UK taxpayer precisely nothing, yet gives us a thriving independent production sector, thousands of jobs and world-renowned, innovative content."

You can read the full letter here: <https://members.bectu.org.uk/filegrab/feu-letter-to-the-dcms-secretary-of-state-regarding-channel-4-privatisation-june-2022.pdf?ref=3032>

## What's the truth about Carrie's job offer?

**O**n Saturday 18 June *The Times* published a story saying Mrs Johnson had been offered the £100,000-a-year role of chief-of-staff by Boris Johnson while he was foreign secretary, at a time when he was having an affair with her whilst still married to the barrister Marina Wheeler.

The item was removed from later editions and not published online after No 10 intervened. However, the journalist who wrote the piece, Simon Walters, told the *New European* website that he stood by it '100%'.

"I was in lengthy and detailed communication with No 10 at a high level, [Mr Johnson's press secretary] Ben Gascoigne and Mrs Johnson's spokeswoman for up to 48 hours before the [Times] went to press," he said.

"At no point did any of them offer an on-the-record denial of any element of the story."

Downing Street confirmed it had contacted the paper on Friday night and asked it to retract the story. *The Times* refused to say why it agreed to remove the story.

Pippa Crerar, Political Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, returned to the story with an 'Exclusive' on 21 June, noting that former Foreign minister Alan Duncan also mentioned in his diaries that the then Carrie Symonds was being lined up as a special adviser.

Pippa Crerar also asserts that later, in autumn 2020 Boris Johnson talked to Downing Street aides about getting his wife two plum jobs, either on the COP 26 summit or with the



**Mirror front page issue with Pippa Crerar 'Exclusive'**

Royal Family.

A *Daily Mirror* editorial linked to the Pippa Crerar report commented, "Democracy is undermined when Mr Johnson dodges detailed straight answers, blusters or lies. If the story is untrue let the Prime Minister face questions from MPs and the media."

**T**he Tories positioned the final nail to hammer into the coffin of the Leveson Inquiry with the obscure pronouncement in the Queen's Speech read out by Prince Charles on 10 May that they were going to repeal Section 40 of the 2013 Crime and Courts Act.

This contentious clause was a component in the shaky structure put up by Lord Justice Leveson after his inquiry in 2011-12 supposedly to install a regulation regime that would secure responsible, fair and decent national media for the UK.

Some hopes of that! It was entirely predictable that the national press would run a brutal campaign against it, to which a Conservative government would ignominiously submit.

The precise function of Section 40 was to penalise publishers that failed to affiliate to a regulator that complied with the terms of the Leveson report. It would deprive them of financial advantages granted to those that had so affiliated in defending civil actions for defamation. The objective was to incentivise them to sign up by making it more costly to defend their lies and errors in court.

To gain these bonuses a Leveson-compliant regulator would have to meet a catalogue of detailed standards to guarantee its independence and fairness, which the owners of the corporate press could never tolerate.

**T**he government duly caved in to their campaign, even though in 2013 it had put the measure through Parliament with all-party support. Two years before that, when the phone-hacking scandal erupted over news that the *News of the World* had hacked the phone of the murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, it was Tory Prime Minister David Cameron who had set up the inquiry, saying: "This is a truly dreadful situation."

The inquiry went on to unearth devastating revelations of the dirty tricks and bullying of the national press, and the depth of the corrupt relationships between the press, the government and the Metropoli-



Photo: Avaaz / Flickr

**Campaigners dressed as Theresa May and Rupert Murdoch protest outside the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2017 at the prospect of May dropping the promised Leveson Inquiry 2**

# It's all over. A look back at Leveson

**Tim Gopsill** on the issues behind an obscure pronouncement in the Queen's Speech

tan Police. It then drew up a programme for reform.

Unsurprisingly this was too much for the media corporations, which denounced the inquiry and all its works as a 'threat to press freedom' – that is, a threat to their profits and their freedom to act at will.

As a gesture of change, they did close their tame self-regulator, the Press Complaints Commission, which was anyway totally discredited after a decade of shameful complicity in the phone-hacking cover-up. Instead they launched the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) – which was the same again apart from the title. The clue, as they say, is in the name: when an organisation is pointedly renamed 'independent', it invariably means it isn't.

In the ensuing battle over the Leveson recommendations, Section 40 assumed a totemic significance. The publishers claimed they were being penalised for making a legitimate choice, and

they had a point.

Nearly all journalists working for the nationals, at a time when their future seemed precarious, supported their bosses' furious objections. The National Union of Journalists, which had supported the Leveson process and presented compelling evidence to the inquiry, found itself facing a rebellion and turned against Section 40.

It was a blunder on Leveson's part, but his project was doomed anyway. Leveson's bigger mistake was to accept the publishers' claim that any statutory element to regulation must mean state censorship.

The straightforward way to deal with complaints against any media would be to have a

**Leveson unearthed devastating revelations of the dirty tricks of the national press**

tribunal; not a government body but a court. No state control, no censorship, no state appointments, no political interference – just retrospective judgement in the public interest.

**T**he publishers accept the civil courts where they fight their defamation cases. What's the difference? Yet even the media reform movement, comprising people who really do believe in press freedom, has bought the owners' argument. Such scruples do not however extend to regulating the online media; no-one in the debates on online harm agonises about state involvement. Again, what's the difference?

Leveson's was a naïve and misguided attempt to repair a glaring fault in our social/political system. It was launched with an immense breadth of support and produced compelling evidence, but not enough of either to threaten our untouchable media corporations.

The repeal will be in a Media Bill to be published later this year.





Potential disruption of the rail network had been looming for several weeks when the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers finally announced the go-ahead for three days of strike action in late June.

The threat of confrontation became a valuable prop for Conservative-supporting newspapers which tried to divert attention from the government's woes by trashing and tormenting the rail union leadership with alarmist story lines and ever more desperate personal attacks.

Instead of examining the repercussions for the railways of the working-from-home phenomenon, and assessing the chances of commuter traffic returning to pre-pandemic levels, the Tory press concentrated on delivering a plethora of outlandish, make-believe scare stories.

Initially the trajectory was all too familiar to anyone who remembered the union bashing coverage of the 1970s and 1980s:

'Rail union dinosaurs in plot to sabotage the Queen's Jubilee,' (*Daily Mail*, 19.5.2022)

'Food shortage fear from

# RMT is press focus for union bashing

**Nicholas Jones** on press coverage in the run-up to the rail strike

summer of rail strikes' (*Daily Express*, 21.5.2022)

'Rail strikes could cause blackouts' (*Daily Mail*, 24.5.2022)

'Union railmen stick up for Kremlin' (*The Times*, 28.5.2022)

Having worked during the Thatcher decade alongside journalists whose daily task it was to churn out such scaremongering story lines, perhaps Leo McKinstry's commentary – 'We need Thatcher's iron will to defeat the union militants' (*Daily*

**The Tory press delivered a plethora of outlandish, make-believe scare stories**

*Express*, 26.5.2022) – was the best illustration of the echo chamber which the Tory press continues to present its readers.

While lurid headlines might have chimed with their readers – 'Anti-monarchist union fire-brand whose profile picture is evil Thunderbirds mastermind' (*Daily Mail*, 9.6.2022) – these attacks worked to the advantage of the RMT general secretary Mick Lynch.

Being branded a militant, as dangerous as his late predecessor Bob Crow, or the miners' leader Arthur Scargill, strengthened his own position within the RMT and the resolve of his members.

An 89 per cent vote in favour of industrial action on a 71 per

cent turn out among 40,000 RMT members on Network Rail and train operators was vindication indeed for Lynch's warning that the country faced the biggest rail strike since privatisation in the late 1990s.

By calling strikes on three separate days – 21, 23 and 25 June – the RMT's action would in effect curtail, if not halt, the network for an entire week.

Banner front-page headlines – 'Hard-left rail union strike to paralyse Britain' (*Daily Mail*, 8.6.2022) – left the government in no doubt that the Tory press was on the warpath and that an anti-union crackdown was urgently needed.

Within days ministers were using signed newspaper articles and exclusive interviews to promote a raft of emergency measures aimed at minimising disruption and preparing fresh legislation to curb the unions.





Overtime on non-strike days would be banned through the introduction of a restricted railway timetable to prevent strikers recouping lost pay through extra shifts.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps promised 'very fast' legal changes to allow agency workers to be hired to replace striking rail staff – 'We'll break rail strikes with agency staff, warns Shapps' (*Daily Mail*, 13.6.2022).

A long-term restraint on the effectiveness of future rail strikes would be achieved through introducing legislation to require the rail unions to provide sufficient staff to operate a minimum service, the equivalent of around 15 per cent of the timetable.

Another well-worn trick of the Tory press was to open an offensive against Labour MPs by publicising campaign donations they had received from the RMT and other unions: 'How rail wreckers bankroll Labour' (*Sun on Sunday*, 12.6.2022).

After several of his shadow cabinet expressed solidarity with the RMT, Labour leader Keir Starmer was under fire for failing to condemn the walk-

outs. As a reminder, a daily 'Keir Starmer strike-o-meter' was printed by the *Daily Mail*.

Starmer's caution was in sharp contrast to the RMT's combative stance, a standpoint Lynch was only too happy to defend when interviewed by Nick Robinson for his podcast *Political Thinking*.

He had no intention of shying away from being cast as a union willing to pick a fight, whatever the personal notoriety this attracted:

"I don't seek it, but if I wasn't known, I wouldn't be doing my job...I know I have an ego...but it's because I want my union to have a high profile."

Unlike some unions, he said the RMT had not lost the ability to call strike action and bargain for higher pay with Network Rail, train operators and Transport for London. His members had not lost either their final salary pension scheme or terms and conditions.

"We have done well in some negotiations. We have maintained our position while others have lost out."

Mr Lynch pointed to pay rates on London Underground. Tube drivers used to be on the

same pay as bus drivers, but the buses had been sub-contracted out and bus drivers relegated down the pay league.

By comparing the success of the RMT's militancy with the performance of other transport unions, Mr Lynch was drawing attention to what 30 to 40 years ago would have been an all-important story line for the former labour and industrial correspondents.

Pay bargaining, workers' terms and conditions and changes to employment law were issues that used to attract detailed coverage across the media and the absence today of such commentary only serves to highlight the lack of any counterbalance to anti-union headlines in the Tory press.

In depth analysis of the reasons for strike action, and the employers' responses, were the backbone of the output of journalists who played a vital role

**Another well-worn trick of the Tory press was to open an offensive against Labour MPs**

in the national and local press, radio, and television.

If in the mainstream media of today there was again the same focus on employment issues and the wider world of trade union affairs, we would have a far better understanding of the impact on working life resulting from both the Covid 19 pandemic and the continuing upheaval over Brexit.

Currently there are fewer people in work; working from home is the norm for a sizeable section of the workforce; and many more have faced an upheaval in their daily routines across wide sectors of industry and business.

Many employees only commute on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays; others benefit from a four-day week. According to the Office for National Statistics these arrangements, together with a variety of other hybrid WFH regimes, have become an almost permanent condition for 40 per cent of people – and for up to 60 per cent of the workforce in Greater London.

A drop in weekday passenger traffic on commuter lines of 20 to 25 per cent and similar falls on the London Underground have to be addressed by Network Rail, train operators and Transport for London and this shift in working patterns cannot be ignored by the RMT and other rail unions.

Up to 2,500 rail jobs, including maintenance workers on tracks, signals, and overhead lines, would be at risk under a proposed £2 billion cut in spending; TfL is seeking a reduction of £400 million, necessitating the closure of 600 posts.

After some 'intense talks' failed to secure either a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies or a pay offer after a two-year wage freeze, the union said it had no alternative but to call for three days of strikes.

The two sides did agree a week later to enter informal talks, but union negotiators do like to take advantage of a rapidly approaching deadline and for the RMT the cliff hanger of on-off strike action goes with the territory.





Front page of the first pilot issue of Ralph's Nader's *Capitol Hill Citizen*

## Ralph Nader launches new paper

Ralph Nader, the veteran activist, is keeping busy. Now 88, his first exposé, *Unsafe at Any Speed*, was in 1965. In April he launched, with his team at the Washington D.C.-based Center for the Study of Responsive Law, the first of three pilot issues of *Capitol Hill Citizen*.

Its motto is 'Democracy Dies in Broad Daylight', a rather different take on the 'Democracy Dies in Darkness' slogan which the *Washington Post* added under its logo in 2017.

Nader points out that, "Congress now is covered by almost 500 full-time reporters but there's this whole other Congress which isn't covered – how it interacts with the people, how it ignores people, how it's influenced by dark forces – money – and what it doesn't do, which is enormous."

Nader's new publication is print only. "We're trying an experiment, however dubious it may appear to people who are wedded to the internet," he says.

"We found out that putting things on the internet is like putting things into a massive void....

"The internet is so cluttered, so we want to try to wean the younger people into reading print, where they're reading in solitude and not being distracted."

FaceBook replaces local newspapers as source of information

# Report's implications for local democracy

The first issue of *Media-North* focused on the fate of local and regional newspapers. Now a new report from the Charitable Journalism Project gives us a sobering, picture of what is happening now.

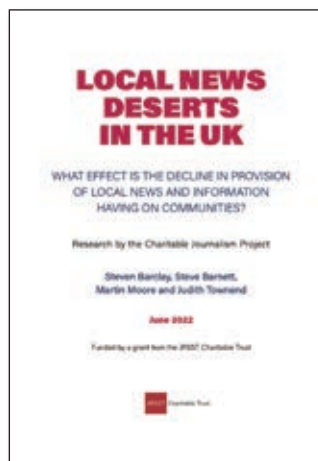
The Foreword to *Local News Deserts in the UK* identifies the problem: 'For often the first time in over two centuries, towns, villages and communities in Britain have no reliable and useful news - either because local newsrooms have been shut down, or because publishers have shrunk their investment in local reporting as the business model for printed news deteriorates.'

The report focuses on seven communities which had all undergone a significant reduction in the provision of local news in recent years. Most communities were strongly associated with a specific newspaper title which had declined.

The two communities chosen in the North were Whitby, North Yorkshire, and Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.

What the researchers found through focus groups was that social media are now the dominant channels of local news and information.

An NHS worker said, "In the past we have used the *Whitby*



Informative report from Charitable Journalism Project

*Gazette* to publicise changes in our (NHS) services like flu vaccine campaigns. We don't do that now because putting something on Facebook is more effective than putting it in the *Gazette*."

However, the downside to this has been the spread of social division and misinformation through social media.

It's also clear from the research that the traditional role of the local newspaper as a glue holding the community together has gone. The new style of local journalism which had replaced it was felt to be commercialised and, on occasion, damaging and divisive, and driven

by 'clickbait'.

At the same time respondents did want a trusted source of local news and also news and information provided by journalists based in their community. The closure of the local newspaper office in Barrow led to a loss of relevance of the title. One respondent said, "I do feel the closure of the office has negatively affected the reporting. You see that online a lot of the photos they use are from Google Maps. It just feels lazy. But you can't expect someone to travel for half an hour just to take a photo and then go home."

There are profound democratic issues at the heart of this report. As the demise of well-resourced, trusted local newspapers accelerates we see editorial staff amalgamated in central locations with the same or similar content distributed to multiple sites.

Inevitably the circulation of local newspapers falls as people feel its content becomes thinner and less relevant. Most worryingly, there is clear evidence that local newspaper circulation has a positive and significant effect on local election turnout.

The report is available at: <https://publicbenefitnews.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/local-news-deserts-in-the-uk.pdf>

## Headlines, deadlines – bottom lines

On 13 June CBS devoted the current affairs programme *60 Minutes* to the threats facing local and regional newspapers in the States.

The usual factors for the closure of news titles were mentioned but the programme focused on one which is having

a disruptive impact, the predatory behaviour of hedge funds and other financial institutions buying up local newspapers and gutting their newsrooms and assets.

Alden Golden Capital in particular, which owns over 200 local newspapers, has been called a 'vulture'. The programme fo-

cuses on what happened to the *Pottstown Mercury* in Pennsylvania after it was taken over by the hedge fund in 2011.

It's an informative programme. Watch it here:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/local-news-financial-firms-60-minutes-video-2022-06-12/#x>

Barry White reviews an important new book on Julian Assange

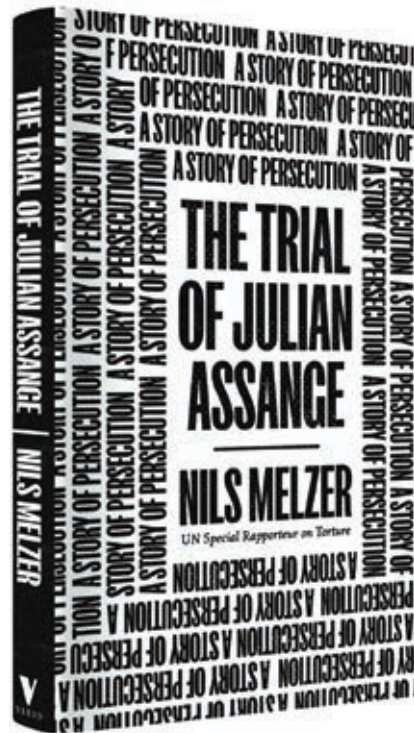
# When telling the truth becomes a crime

**N**ils Melzer, currently the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, has written a remarkable book about the hounding and persecution of Julian Assange. It is a book that by Melzer's own admission he had not intended to write. Initially he declined to get involved in Assange's case although he had been aware of WikiLeaks disclosures since 2010. But as he started to look closely at the facts he found Assange to be a victim of political persecution.

Like many he had been influenced by much of the media coverage which had subsequently portrayed Assange as a rapist, a narcissist, a spy and a hacker. Assange's lawyers had contacted him in his capacity as the special rapporteur on torture in December 2018 when Assange was still in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, asking for intervention under the conditions of the Anti-Torture Convention, as his living conditions were considered inhumane. After three months of studying the medical reports and further pressure from Assange's lawyers he decided to look deeper into the case.

Melzer wrote the book because 'when investigating the case of Julian Assange, I came across compelling evidence of political persecution and gross judicial arbitrariness, as well as of deliberate torture and ill-treatment. But the responsible states (the UK, Sweden, Ecuador and the US) refused to co-operate with me in clearing up these allegations and to initiate the investigative measures required by international laws.'

Melzer details his first visit to Assange in Belmarsh high-



**THE TRIAL OF JULIAN ASSANGE**  
**A Story of Persecution**

Nils Meltzer with Oliver Kobold  
Verso / £20

security prison in South East London on 9 May 2019 where he examined his health, prison conditions and treatment in order to draw clear conclusions based on reliable information for his investigations. Slowly the author began to assemble the story of a political persecution.

**H**e examines the behaviour of the Swedish and UK authorities (including the Crown Prosecution Service, the CPC) in dealing with the rape allegations against Assange. He asserts that the Swedish authorities did everything to prevent a proper investigation and judicial resolutions of the

rape allegations against Assange. In so acting, he argues, they demonstrated a shocking indifference to the rights not only of Assange, but of the two women involved.

One chapter deals with Assange's near seven year asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy, how a refuge became a trap, and how increasing surveillance measures were increased inside the embassy especially from 2017. He also reveals that in March 2018 Ecuadorian officials began to intensify their slander campaign against Assange (having partly restricted his internet access in October 2016) and received zealous support from their British counterparts.

In an Assange briefing to the House of Commons on 27 March 2019, Alan Duncan, Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, said that: 'It's about time that this miserable little worm walked out of the embassy and gave himself up to British justice.'

The book also examines the US treatment of Chelsea Manning and the decision of the US authorities to seek Assange's extradition on espionage charges (although at first they only came up with one charge of 'conspiracy to commit comput-

er intrusion'). After his arrest on 11 April 2019 having been dragged out of the embassy, they were increased to 18 when the US Justice Department announced a further 17 criminal charges against the WikiLeaks founder.

**M**elzer is also critical of the established press in the US, UK and Australia. Having elevated Assange to hero level when they only too willingly published the WikiLeaks findings in 2010, he accuses them of not understanding the existential danger posed by the trial of Julian Assange to press freedom, due process and democracy and the rule of law. He asserts: 'The painful truth is that, if only the main media organisations of the Anglosphere so decided, Assange's persecution could be ended tomorrow.' What's more he states that: 'Without a doubt, a comparable joint action of solidarity by *The Guardian*, the BBC, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* would put an immediate end to the persecution of Julian Assange.'

Co-written with the German author Oliver Kobold, *The Trial of Julian Assange* has been given very positive reviews. Daniel Ellsberg, the whistle blower behind The Pentagon Papers, describes the book as: 'A stunning account of how official secrecy, corruption and impunity suffocate the truth and poison the rule of rule.'

As the author says: 'The real purpose behind Assange's imprisonment and trial is to deter journalists from exposing state crimes and intimidate them into not publishing material that challenges dominant political interests.'

**Evidence of political persecution and judicial arbitrariness, as well as of deliberate torture**





Cover of the new *MediaNorth* booklet

## New MN publication looks at future of BBC

In May *MediaNorth* published a booklet *Uncertain Future: Why The BBC Must Survive*. We felt that the incessant attacks on the BBC by the Tory Press and Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries needed to be challenged and rebutted.

You can read it online at: <https://medianorth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/MN.WarOnBBC.Web.pdf>

If you would like a print version of the booklet send a cheque for £3.00 – made out to CPBF(North) – to CPBF North at 24 Tower Avenue Upton nr Pontefract West Yorks WF9 1EE

We urge you to publicise the booklet through your networks and contact us at [cpbfnorth@outlook.com](mailto:cpbfnorth@outlook.com) if you would like someone to speak to your organisation about this issue.

# We're back! Join us at South Yorkshire Festival event

Wortley Hall,  
Unison Room  
Sunday 14 August, 3.00pm  
Free admission

We're delighted to be hosting our first public meeting since 2019 at Wortley Hall. Our regular slot will have the former BBC industrial and political correspondent Nick Jones

speaking. Nick always draws an appreciative audience for his lively and well-informed presentations.

We haven't decided the topic Nick will speak on because there are so many issues to choose from and we wanted to wait until nearer the time to make the final choice.

Here is a list of some of the possible topics we've discussed:

the attack on public service broadcasting; media coverage of trade unions taking industrial action under the Tories; this year saw the fiftieth anniversary of Saltley Gate in the 1972 miners' strike and the impact of the 1984-85 miners' strike still resonates. Why?

Put the date in your diary and enjoy a day out at the 'workers' stately home'.



Wortley Hall, venue for our public meeting at the South Yorkshire Festival on 14 August

## Watch our Festival of Debate events

If you missed our two events at this year's Festival of Debate you can still watch them.

Our first zoom event was 'Official Secrecy: How government plans threaten journalists and whistleblowers' with jour-

nalist Martin Bright, historian and investigative journalist Stephen Dorril, MI5 whistleblower Annie Machon and NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet.

The second was 'What Has the BBC Ever Done For Us?' with Peter York, co-author (with Patrick Barwise) of *The War Against the BBC*, Dorothy Byrne former Head of News at Channel 4, Dr Tom Mills, author of *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service* and chair of the Media Reform Coalition, and Paulette Edwards a presenter with BBC Radio Sheffield.

They are available to watch on the MediaNorth website at: [https://medianorth.org.uk/?page\\_id=42](https://medianorth.org.uk/?page_id=42)

## Victory for journalism

The potential costs of defending a libel case can run into millions of pounds. (See front-page story in March *MediaNorth*).

These chilling realities explain why British journalists are reluctant to publish information about wealthy or powerful individuals. Carol Cadwalladr was faced with this grim reality when Arron Banks, the wealthy figure at the heart of the Brexit campaign, chose to sue her personally for libel.

The case could have resulted in personal bankruptcy and the personal, physical, psychological and professional toll for her of fighting the case has been profound.

Her successful public interest defence and the verdict were a great vindication for her work.

# MediaNorth

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