



Kevin Cooper Photoline

Barry McCaffrey (front row, centre left) and Trevor Birney (front row, centre right) with NUJ and Amnesty International UK outside the Royal Courts of Justice, Belfast

Extent of police surveillance in Northern Ireland revealed

Huge victory for *No Stone Unturned* journalists

By Granville Williams

The film *No Stone Unturned*, first shown in September 2017, is an outstanding piece of journalism which exposes human rights abuses in Northern Ireland. The film focuses on the unsolved murders of six innocent people in the village of Loughinisland, 20 miles south of Belfast.

The killers and their driver were widely believed to have been members of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force who lived locally. No one has been prosecuted for the murders.

The journalists who researched the film, Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney, were arrested in a dawn raid on their homes in August 2018 by 100 armed offic-

ers who took them into custody, questioned them for 14 hours and confiscated their computers and mobile phones.

They later won a court case which found that warrants used to search their homes had been 'inappropriate'. The High Court judge said they had acted properly in protecting their sources in a lawful way and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) later paid damages amounting to £875,000.

In 2019 Birney and McCaffrey lodged a complaint with the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) asking it to establish whether there had been any unlawful surveillance of them and the legality of repeated and unjustified attempts by the police to identify their sources.

Finally in December 2024 in what has been described as a 'landmark for press freedom' the IPT ruled that a police surveillance operation deployed against the journalists was unlawful. The ruling is of significance because it is the first time that the IPT has ordered a police force to

pay damages to journalists for unlawful intrusion. For this the PSNI will pay £4,000 each in damages to Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey.

This was a remarkable judgment, considering the IPT's track record. Since its formation in 2001 it has conducted 4,073 investigations into complaints made against the intelligence agencies and police surveillance units. It has upheld only 1% (47) of those complaints.

Unlawful state surveillance

Three police forces have been involved in this legal case – the PSNI, the Metropolitan Police, and Durham Constabulary. Durham police were acting on behalf of the PSNI when the two journalists were arrested as part of a criminal investigation in 2018. The judgment ruled against the PSNI and the Met.

Trevor Birney said, "The judgment serves as a warning that unlawful state surveillance targeting the media cannot and should not be justified by broad and vague police claims.

"As a result of our case going to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, the PSNI has already been forced to admit that they spied on 300 journalists and 500 lawyers in Northern Ireland."

Disclosures at the tribunal also revealed the Metropolitan Police, acting on behalf of the PSNI, obtained more than 4,000 text messages and phone communications belonging to Barry McCaffrey, Trevor Birney and more than a dozen journalists working for the BBC Northern Ireland investigative programme *Spotlight*, including former BBC journalist Vincent Kearney.

Barry McCaffrey said: "This ruling marks a significant victory for press freedom, and it has exposed critical failures in both the monitoring and oversight of surveillance operations carried out against journalists and their sources.

"Despite all of their efforts, the police were still unable to identify our sources for the film. They wasted police time and resources going after us instead of the Loughinisland killers." **MN**

BBC consults on draft Editorial Guidelines

Julian Petley highlights the critical issues

The BBC has recently undertaken a consultation on its draft Editorial Guidelines in which it has made much of the issue of impartiality. In light of widespread concern that its news agenda appears to be shadowing that of the Conservative press it is greatly needed.

What the consultation seems to be suggesting is increased visibility for those engaged in the endless culture wars against liberal values – in other words, for those on the far right. The consultation notes that ‘the guideline on breadth of opinion has been expanded and recognises that appropriate breadth and diversity, combined with freedom of expression, may mean the inclusion of views some in the audience find offensive’.

It also highlights the fact that the section of the Draft Guidelines entitled *Contentious Views and Possible Offence* ‘now puts greater emphasis on freedom of expression and the need to sometimes take into account impartiality in judgements about “offence”, which itself may now encompass issues beyond, for instance, extreme political views’.

The problem is that the notion of offence has become entangled with extreme political views, because it, along with freedom of expression, has been weaponised by the culture warriors of the far right. Those who argue for the regulation of certain kinds of speech generally do so not because they find such speech offensive but because, among other things, it stirs up hatred and division, propagates disinformation or is used to harass, bully and threaten.

However, calls for its regulation are immediately charac-



Alastair Campbell, Jacqui Smith and Nigel Farage on BBC Question Time 5 December 2024

terised by the likes of the right wing of the Tory party, Reform, the Free Speech Union and Elon Musk as ‘woke’ demands for censorship, which has now shifted from being a concern primarily of liberals to becoming a hobby horse of the far/hard/alt/libertarian right. In doing so it has essentially mutated into a demand for consequence-free speech and for those who object to such speech to shut up.

It’s hard to see the consultation as anything other than an attempt to gain consent for changes which have already been made by the BBC in relation to impartiality, as it appears to take every possible opportunity to platform Nigel Farage, Richard Tice and now Tim Montgomerie – in spite of Reform UK having a mere five parliamentary seats. The most obvious example of this is Farage’s ubiquity on *Question Time*, with 38 appearances in all to date – far more than the vast bulk of politicians from the mainstream parties – and only since July as a Westminster MP.

It might be argued that some of his earlier appearances could be justified by his status as a UKIP MEP from 1999 to 2020, but this fails to explain why Farage himself appeared far more than any other MEP, and why not a single pro-EU UK MEP ap-

Party	Total seats	Total vote	Share of total vote
Lib-Democrats	72	3,519,143	12.2%
Reform UK	5	4,117,610	14.3%
Greens	4	1,944,501	6.7%

peared on the programme between 2010 and 2019.

According to *Question Time*’s webpage, the programme is: rooted in politics and therefore has to achieve fair and appropriate representation from the various political parties across the UK.

In the past this appeared to mean that MPs from parties with a large number of seats were featured more frequently than those from parties with fewer. The real problem here, particularly in the light of the results of the July 2024 general election, concerns the amount of appearances made by MPs from ‘other political parties’. The main ones (leaving aside Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish parties) performed in the general election in July as shown in the chart above.

Two possible reasons for this suggest themselves. First, the BBC has taken an editorial decision that Reform (as with UKIP before it) deserves a level of broadcast representation out of all proportion to its parliamen-

tary presence, and is utilising its share of the total vote as a yardstick. (However, this doesn’t account for the disparity with the Liberal-Democrats in terms of broadcast appearances). And second, that Farage – a ‘master of political storytelling’ according to BBC political editor Chris Mason – is simply regarded as the broadcast equivalent of ‘good copy’, however poisonous his message.

Neither reason is remotely acceptable. The first would represent a major shift of policy regarding the representation of political parties on air, undertaken without any public consultation. And the second would represent a complete abandonment of the journalistic standards proper to a public service broadcaster.

The consultation on the draft Editorial Guidelines should be an opportunity to engage in a wide-ranging and critical debate on how the BBC understands impartiality, not a chance for the BBC to seek agreement to changes which it appears to have already made out of public view.

Opinion

Is the BBC now the official spokesperson for Reform?

By **Tony Burke**

Researchers at Cardiff University have produced a detailed analysis of every episode of the BBC's flagship *Question Time* programme broadcast between September 2014 and July 2023 to see if the broadcaster was balancing political viewpoints.

Analysing 352 programmes with 1734 guest slots filled by 661 different people, the analysis found that, while the BBC had 'broadly balanced' appearances from representatives of the UK's main political parties, when it came to members of the media, a right-wing bias became evident.

Matt Walsh, head of the School of Journalism, Media and

Culture at Cardiff University, wrote: "Removing politicians from the list of most frequent guests, shows that several high-frequency panellists are being used, most of whom come from the political right.

"The regularly featured journalists are typically opinion columnists who contribute to right-wing press outlets such as the *Mail* or the *Telegraph*, or who make appearances on right-leaning broadcasters like GB News and TalkTV."

The five most regular non-political guests have all written for the right-wing *Spectator* magazine. These are Isabel Oakeshott, Julia Hartley-Brewer, Kate Andrews, Tim Stanley and Camilla Tominey, with no such similar frequency of guests from left-



Nigel Farage on GB News, 7 July 2024. What are the BBC's motives for giving him so much airtime?

wing media.

Oakeshott appeared 13 times across the period studied, whilst the most frequent guest from a left-wing publication – Ash Sarkar from Novara Media – appeared just six times.

Walsh added that the BBC's over reliance on guests from right-wing media suggests a failure to achieve balance.

The report comes at a time when Reform Party leader Nigel Farage (with just five MPs) appeared for the 38th time on *Question Time*.

Only the late Charles Kennedy of the Lib Dems appeared on the BBC show more times.

Although Farage was demolished by Tony Blair's former Chief of Staff Alastair Campbell at his last QT outing, his appear-

ances are causing grave concern about the BBC's motives in allowing him so much airtime. Is he an audience puller or, as many people on the left believe, a vacuous and divisive populist who the right-wing media would like to see as the PM?

The 'sofa shows' have been fixated since the July 2024 General Election with right wing pundits and former Tory MPs with nothing new to say except spinning stories the right-wing media run no matter how ridiculous – which the BBC then turn into 'news'.

Maybe Labour's communications team are fearful of actually having people around who are adept at getting their punches in first, as Campbell, Charlie Whelan and David Hill were! **MN**

Study finds GB News 'risks inciting violence' against Muslims

By **Granville Williams**

A new report by the Muslim Council of Britain's Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM), has concluded that television channel GB News 'risks inciting violence' against Muslims.

The report found that over two years the channel mentioned Muslims or Islam more than 17,000 times in its output. This accounts for a staggering 50 percent of total mentions on British news channels. The report alleges that GB News 'rarely features Muslim perspectives',

'fails to challenge Islamophobic remarks' and portrays Muslims as a 'Trojan horse' in the UK.

It has an 'excessive' focus on Muslims bordering on an 'obsession' and 'regularly demonises their beliefs', the report found.

Significantly, the report slammed the channel's coverage of the far-right riots which took place over the summer.

The CfMM's report found that 'GB News accounted for 62% of all clips on UK news channels that associated Muslims with the riots' and repeatedly framed Muslims as perpetrators rather than victims of violence, down-

playing attacks on mosques and Muslim communities, contributing to a biased narrative'.

CfMM director Rizwana Hamid said: "Prior to GB News entering the British media landscape most of our attention was focused on the misrepresentation of Muslims and Islam in print and online publications given that Ofcom's broadcast regulations were always more robust than the press regulator IPSO.

"However, the volume of anti-Muslim hate on GB News and Ofcom's reluctance to regulate its harmful content has meant that politicians and commen-

tators have been give carte blanche to malign Muslims and Islam in a way that no other channel does."

Former ITN executive and Ofcom regulator, Stewart Purvis, said the findings raised vital questions for the broadcasting regulator Ofcom: "Has its deregulated model for broadcast news created an unintended consequence? Can a broadcaster be allowed to try to build its audience and political influence by a consistently negative portrayal of an ethnic community?"

A GB News spokesperson responded: "This inaccurate and defamatory report is nothing more than a cynical, self-serving attempt to silence free speech. It proves exactly why a news organisation like GB News needs to exist and why it is succeeding."

Norman Solomon analyses America's media coverage of Israel's brutal military

US media obscures truths

A few days before the end of 2024, the independent magazine +972 reported that “Israeli army forces stormed the Kamal Adwan Hospital compound in Beit Lahiya, culminating in a nearly week-long siege of the last functioning hospital in northern Gaza.” While fire spread through the hospital, its staff issued a statement saying that “surgical departments, laboratory, maintenance, and emergency units have been completely burned,” and patients were “at risk of dying at any moment.”

The magazine explained that “the assault on medical facilities in Beit Lahiya is the latest escalation in Israel’s brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing in northern Gaza which over the last three months forcibly displaced the vast majority of Palestinians living in the area.” The journalism from +972 – in sharp contrast to the dominant coverage of the Gaza war from US media – has provided clarity about real-time events, putting them in overall context rather than episodic snippets.

+972 magazine is the work of Palestinian and Israeli journalists who describe their core values as “a commitment to equity, justice, and freedom of information” – which necessarily means “accurate and fair journalism that spotlights the people and communities working to oppose occupation and apartheid.” But the operative values of mainstream US news outlets have been very different.

Key aspects of how the US establishment has narrated the ‘war on terror’ for more than two decades were standard in American media and politics from the beginning of the Gaza war in October 2023. For instance:

- Routine discourse avoided voices condemning the US government for its role in the slaughter of civilians.

- The US ally usually eluded accountability for its high-tech atrocities committed from the air.

- Civilian deaths in Gaza were habitually portrayed as unintended.



- Claims that Israel was aiming to minimise civilian casualties were normally taken at face value.

- Media coverage and political rhetoric stayed away from acknowledging that Israel’s actions might fit into such categories as ‘mass murder’ or ‘terrorism’.

- Overall, news media and government officials emitted a mindset that Israeli lives really mattered a lot more than Palestinian lives.

Obscuring reality

The Gaza war has received a vast amount of US media attention, but how much it actually communicated about the human realities was a whole other matter.

What was most important about war in Gaza – what it was like to be terrorised, massacred, maimed, and traumatised – remained almost entirely out of view

The belief or unconscious notion that news media were conveying war’s realities ended up obscuring those realities all the more. And journalism’s inherent limitations were compounded by media biases.

In-depth content analysis by *The Intercept* found that coverage of the war’s first six weeks by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* “showed a consistent bias against Palestinians.”

Those highly influential news outlets “disproportionately emphasised Israeli deaths in the conflict” and “used emotive language to describe the killings of Israelis, but not Palestinians.”

For example: “The term ‘slaughter’ was used by editors and reporters to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 60 to 1, and ‘massacre’ was used to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 125 to 2. ‘Horrific’ was used to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 36 to 4.”

During the first five months of the war, the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* applied the word ‘brutal’ or its variants far more often to Palestinians (77 percent) than to Israelis (23 percent). The findings, in a [fair.org/home/brutal-is-a-word-mostly-reserved-for-palestinian-violence] study by Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting, pointed to an imbalance that occurred “even though Israeli violence was responsible for more than 20 times as much loss of life.” News articles and opinion pieces were remarkably in the same groove: “the lopsided rate at which ‘brutal’ was used in op-eds to characterise Palestinians over Israelis was exactly the same as the supposedly straight news stories.”

Despite exceptional coverage at times, what was most profoundly important about war in Gaza – what it was like to be terrorised, massacred, maimed, and traumatised – remained almost entirely out of view. Gradually, surface accounts reaching the American

campaign in the Middle East

about Gaza war



Video screenshot shows the scene after the Israeli army burned and destroyed the Kamal Edwan hospital in Beit Lahiya in the north of Gaza just before the end of 2024. Soldiers arrested many of the patients and medical staff and marched them away after forcing them to strip

public came to seem repetitious and normal. As death numbers kept rising and months went by, the Gaza war diminished as a news topic, while most talk shows seldom discussed it.

As with the slaughter via bombardment, the Israeli-US alliance treated the increasing onset of starvation, dehydration, and fatal disease as a public-relations problem. Along the way, official pronouncements – and the policies they tried to justify – were deeply anchored in the unspoken premise that some lives really matter and some really don't.

The propaganda approach was foreshadowed on October 8, 2023, with Israel in shock from

the atrocities that Hamas had committed the previous day. "This is Israel's 9/11," the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations told reporters in New York, and he repeated: "This is Israel's 9/11." Meanwhile, in a PBS News Weekend interview, Israel's ambassador to the United States declared: "This is, as someone said, our 9/11."

Reason to kill

What was sinister about proclaiming 'Israel's 9/11' was what happened after America's 9/11. Wearing the cloak of victim, the United States proceeded to use the horrible tragedy that occurred inside its borders as an open-ended reason to kill in the name of retaliation, self-protection, and, of course, the 'war on terror'.

As Israel's war on Gaza persisted, the explanations often echoed the post-9/11 rationales for the 'war on terror' from the US government: authorising future crimes against humanity as

necessary in the light of certain prior events. Reverberation was in the air from late 2001, when the Pentagon's leader Donald Rumsfeld asserted that "responsibility for every single casualty in this war, whether they're innocent Afghans or innocent Americans, rests at the feet of the al Qaeda and the Taliban."

After five weeks of massacring Palestinian people, Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "any civilian loss is a tragedy" – and quickly added that "the blame should be placed squarely on Hamas." The licenses to kill were self-justifying. And they had no expiration date. **MN**

Norman Solomon is the director of RootsAction.org and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy in the United States. This article is adapted from the afterword in the paperback edition of his latest book, War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine (The New Press).

Year ends with 5 more Palestinian journalists killed

An Israeli air strike killed five Palestinian journalists in a clearly marked vehicle outside a hospital in central Gaza on 26 December. The journalists from *Al-Quds Today* were outside al-Awda Hospital in the Nuseirat refugee camp when their van was struck. Images from the scene show a white-coloured van with the word 'press' clearly written in large red letters, engulfed in flames.

Israel's military confirmed that it carried out the strike, claiming it targeted a vehicle carrying members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad but provided no evidence to support its claim.

Earlier in December, Israeli forces killed four journalists in separate strikes on December 14 and 15.

Since Israel's war on Gaza began over a year ago, the military has, on several occasions, killed journalists and later claimed they were fighters, often providing no evidence at all or evidence that has been widely questioned.

When Israeli forces killed Al Jazeera journalist Ismail al-Ghoul on 31 July they claimed he was a Hamas fighter who had received a military ranking in 2007 – when he would have been just 10 years old.

Israel has stepped up attacks on journalists and media infrastructure since the start of its northern Gaza campaign on 5 October. These attacks have placed severe constraints on coverage of the devastating impact of Israel's northern Gaza military offensive.

There is now an information void with almost no professional journalists left in the north to document what is clearly an ethnic cleansing campaign. And of course Israel has not allowed international media independent access to Gaza since the war began. **MN**

After five weeks of massacring Palestinian people, Benjamin Netanyahu said that "any civilian loss is a tragedy ..."

Ofcom sides with local newspaper owners against BBC

By Tim Gopsill

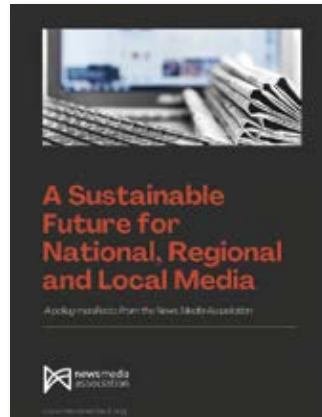
One of the more repugnant spectacles on the media stage is that of newspaper publishers gaming the system to do down the BBC.

For years commercial media have been accusing the corporation of ‘unfair competition’ because of its guaranteed licence fee income.

Their case does appeal to antagonistic governments and regulators, who have in the past blocked BBC innovations, loaded it with extra costs and frozen the licence fee: the Media Reform Coalition has calculated that it has lost 25 per cent of its value since 2010.

Now the News Media Association, representing groups that control what is left of the local press, seem to have persuaded the regulator Ofcom that the BBC’s local websites are a threat that must be constrained.

The corporation has adopted a policy of switching local news



NMA urged Ofcom to stop BBC crowding out local publishers

output from radio to online. In December Ofcom produced a *Review of Local News in the UK* that said this “forms part of the headwinds facing local publishers and there may be some local areas where BBC viewing is displacing commercial viewing.”

A sorry state

Ofcom’s research showed that referrals from Google to BBC regional pages rose from 15

million in April 2022 to more than 40 million by June 2024. In 2022 the pages had a 26 per cent share of monthly average local news page views; now it is 37 per cent.

The local publishers have reduced their papers and websites to a sorry state, as they reacted to online competition by sacking staff and slashing costs, rather than investing in digital themselves.

Ironically, such reporting of local civic affairs as has survived is thanks to the BBC – through the Local Democracy Reporters scheme, launched by the corporation to make good the growing news deficit. The BBC pays the publishers to employ 165 reporters, most of them for the big newspaper chains. There are frequent complaints that many are not paid the full amount, and are often required to work outside the formal remit.

This is not a factor for Ofcom, which is still warning the BBC: it said, “It is possible that future BBC changes will have a differ-

ent impact on commercial publishers. If the BBC provided more localised online content people might choose it over alternative online sources Therefore, some future BBC changes may require further consideration by the BBC and Ofcom.”

Veiled language

Naturally it is the BBC’s job to provide the best news it can – especially, it might be said, where alternative commercial provision is so poor. But Ofcom does have a duty to ‘consider the impact of the BBC’s activities on fair and effective competition’. Its report said: “In meeting its objectives, the BBC may harm the ability of others to compete effectively.”

In veiled language, that is a threat to use its powers to direct the BBC to cut back on its local news website expansion. Ofcom cannot regulate the commercial alternatives. The fact that they are incapable of producing news to the same standard will not come into it. **MN**

On the evening of 21 November 1974 bombs planted by the IRA in two crowded Birmingham pubs exploded, killing 21 people and injuring 220.

Within 24 hours, six men – Paddy Hill, Gerry Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power, Johnny Walker and Hughie Callaghan – were arrested and charged. All were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The six wrongly convicted men said they had been forced into making confessions after brutal interrogations. Police used torture to extract false confessions to the crimes, with Paddy Hill later recalling how his interrogators had “jammed a pistol in my mouth and smashed it around, breaking my teeth.

“They told me they knew I was innocent but they didn’t care,” he recalled in 2010. “They

50th anniversary of Birmingham 6 miscarriage of justice

had been told to get a conviction.”

Photos of the six men released at the time showed evidence of assault but it took 17 years to get their convictions overturned.

These events were recalled by journalist and politician Chris Mullin at a 50th anniversary meeting in London on 20 November 2024.

Asked why he got involved, Mullin explained that he was tipped off about potential flaws in the case by a *Guardian* journalist friend Peter Chippindale,

who had covered the Birmingham trials and thought they had got the wrong people.

Ray Fitzwalter, in charge of Granada’s *World in Action*, explains in his book *The Dream That Died* that he was approached in the early eighties by families of the Birmingham Six – “but there was no hard evidence to support their case. We declined to pursue it.”

Persistent pressure

It took persistent pressure from Chris Mullin to finally convince Ray Fitzwalter. Ian McBride

produced and Chris Mullin and Charles Tremayne worked as researchers on *In The Interests of Justice* transmitted in 1985. It was the first of three programmes which Ray Fitzwalter judged ‘one of Granada’s greatest achievements in factual programmes’.

Chris Mullin also published *Error of Judgement* in 1986. A new edition was recently published.

The guilty verdicts were quashed by the Court of Appeal at the second attempt on 14 March 1991.

Paddy Hill died, aged 80, on Monday 30 December 2024. He bore the scars of his interrogation, including cigarette burns, for the rest of his life. In 2001 he founded Miscarriages of Justice Organisation – Mojo – to help other former prisoners, released by the court of appeal after their sentences were quashed. **MN**

Cartoons that packed a punch

Nick Jones reviews a collection of cartoons by Alan Hardman (1936-2023)

Alan Hardman was one of a much-admired group of cartoonists whose work for left-wing publications challenged the considerable influence of the dominant pro-Thatcher press during the bitter industrial conflicts of the 1980s.

Their illustrations had a far wider reach than was the case with their rivals in Fleet Street because their imagery lived on, being widely reproduced in posters and leaflets which were distributed at demonstrations and other events.

In a pre-digital age, imaginative artwork was essential for effective trade union campaigning.

Hardman's cartoons and caricatures for the weekly newspaper *Militant* were often republished within days in literature and publicity material handed round at strike meetings and on picket lines.

His graphic, eye-catching work was circulated widely during the 1984-85 miners' strike.

Pit cartoons stand out

Illustrations in support of the pit dispute rightly take pride of place in the opening chapter of *Need Not Greed* which has been published by his family and friends, and which brings together a selection of his cartoons spanning 40 years of political and industrial struggle.

Hardman, a printer by trade who became a shop steward, joined the *Militant* Tendency in 1971 and started drawing cartoons alongside his role prepar-

ing and printing their weekly newspaper.

The more interested he became in layout and typography the more he thought the paper should have a cartoon. His first attempt was about the newly elected Conservative Prime Minister Ted Heath.

It 'went down fairly well' with the editorial team and so began what he described as a life-long commitment to the role of socialist cartoonist.

In a foreword Hardman wrote before his death, he thought many of his cartoons remained as relevant as when he first drew them.

He said his aim was to capture the essence of a major political or industrial battle: "As a political cartoonist for a socialist newspaper there was nothing to hold me back. Other cartoonists who worked for the capitalist press were not able to do that.

"This confirms the absolute need for socialist change to ensure that everyone can achieve their full potential to benefit society rather than justify the greed of the few. This is the reason I chose the title, *Need Not Greed*."

As I turn over the book's finely produced pages, his cartoons from the pit dispute stand out, reflecting the passion and anger of his own family history and his determination to use his skill as an illustrator to express solidarity and support for those on strike.

Hardman's father, uncles and grandfather were all miners in Yorkshire. His grandfather and



Front page art for the *Young Miner*

an uncle both lost their lives down the pit.

"My dad and another one of my uncles tried to dig them out but they couldn't and, tragically, they both died.

"My uncle Leo - there were ten brothers - told me that when, in 1947, the pits were nationalised, it was the first time that he felt safe going to work as they started using hydraulic props instead of the wooden ones."

A rare breed

In stark contrast to their counterparts on the national press, cartoonists for left-wing publications had no hesitation in developing imagery which they believed had been validated by the Battle of Orgreave.

Hardman's illustration for the front page of the *Young Miner* left no room for doubt about the force being deployed to disable Arthur Scargill when he was hit on the head.

"I'm arresting you for obstructing my truncheon," said the riot officer. His other hand was round the scruff of Scargill's neck.

Equally striking was his de-

sign for a poster demanding support for the strike. Based on the wartime recruiting illustration, *Lord Kitchener Wants You*, Hardman reworked the image.

A miner wearing a helmet and pit lamp had a trenchant instruction: "Your class needs YOU: Save the Pits."

Hardman was described by the *Daily Cartoonist* as one of a very rare breed of socialist illustrator whose dedication helped to amplify the message of socialism throughout his entire life.

In his tribute, Peter Taaffe, founding editor of *Militant* and former general secretary of the Socialist Party, said Hardman's miners' strike cartoons were a significant contribution.

They were inspired by his discussions with miners and other *Militant* supporters and would be drawn in a matter of hours, and then within days could be seen on the picket line, conveying quick and simple political messaging.

"Sometimes a visual cartoon can encapsulate political points in a more dynamic way; other times Alan could pick up an action or a phrase and develop a whole point," said Taaffe. **MN**



NEED NOT GREED
Alan Hardman
Bluecoat Press / £45.00



RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch joins striking *Guardian* and *Observer* journalists on the picket line

Mutiny at *The Observer*

By Tim Gopsill

Does it matter who owns *The Observer* Sunday newspaper? Not to most people, but enough to those who work for it to go on strike and threaten further action – even after a deal to sell it has been agreed.

Sunday papers are a dying breed, and the half dozen that survive are all sustained by umbilical links to a daily publication; although *The Observer* is more than 200 years old it has since 1993 essentially been the Sunday *Guardian*. Not for long now, unless the workers can somehow stop a bizarre scheme to ‘sell’ the title to a failing online publisher called Tortoise Media.

Tortoise is a vanity project run by a tremendously important journalist called James Harding, a former editor of *The Times* and Director of News at the BBC. His site launched in 2019 to publish long ‘slow news’ features, but it couldn’t make money

and abandoned the format in favour of fashionable podcasts and live seminars with important business people, largely from the energy industry. It does need rescuing, but not, according to everyone except the two managements involved, by *The Guardian*, in the form of the gift of *The Observer*.

This is not strictly a ‘sale’. *The Guardian* is putting £5 million out of £20 million new investment into the transferred paper; the source of the rest is secret. Tortoise will make a formal payment to *The Guardian* but the amount is undisclosed. Neither can anyone say, given Tortoise’s record and personnel and the state of the market, how the move might possibly work.

All the six living former editors of either title have condemned it, along with many notable *Guardian* readers, artists, politicians and others. They have crowded to the picket lines as the 600-plus journalists and associated workers took action

following an astounding 93 per cent NUJ vote to strike – an unheard-of outcome in a postal ballot for most unions. This is not a strike over pay or conditions: it is to save the paper.

They can only surmise that it is a disguised move to kill off *The Observer*, which *Guardian* managers have long wanted to do but were prevented by the terms of the 1993 takeover – though this is contested by the Scott Trust Ltd that owns the group. *The Guardian* makes a big sanctimonious meal out of its ‘alternative’ ownership structure, but one consequence of the dispute has been to utterly discredit the trust. It consists of a dozen liberal worthies – bankers, lawyers, academics – chaired by a Norwegian newspaper manager who was mightily embarrassed when they staged a rare staff meeting by not knowing who senior journalists were. There are only two journalists on the trust: the editor Kath Viner plus another elected by the staff who is barred from disclosing the discussions to colleagues.

But even after four days of strikes the move is still going ahead, and journalists are considering further actions, such as non-cooperation when it happens. Others include a vote of no confidence in Kath Viner, which would likely be carried, leaving her position untenable. Her journalists are baffled as to why she should choose to wreck her career over this.

MN

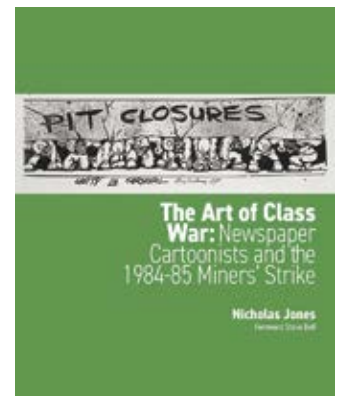
Coming Events

Class War book launch

We will be publishing *The Art of Class War: Newspaper Cartoonists and the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike* by journalist and broadcaster Nick Jones later in February. Looking back at the year-long miners’ strike through the imagery of news cartoonists, Nick offers a vivid interpretation of an industrial dispute which tore the country apart.

From opposing perspectives of right and left, their graphic portrayal of a confrontation which traumatised the mining communities is like an angry, unfolding tapestry. Hundreds of illustrations were published including cartoons, caricatures and cartoon strips.

The book launch is at 2.00pm on **Saturday 1 March** at Leeds Playhouse. It is timed to coincide with the final week of the year-long miners’ strike forty years ago. You can book your place here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/book-launch-the-art-of-class-war-tickets-1125228762519>



Alan Hardman’s cartoon on the *Art of Class War* cover

Festival of Debate

Framed: The Demonisation of Disability is the topic of our online event for this year’s Festival of Debate. It will be held on **Thursday 8 May 6.00-7.30pm**. More details on speakers to follow but put the date in your diary now.

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MediaNorth

This issue was published on 10 January, 2025

Editor: Granville Williams | **Design and Production:** Tony Sutton

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