



Will enquiry reveal extent of corruption?

Granville Williams on the next stage of the Covid inquiry

The Covid inquiry is taking us back again to the dysfunctional and corrupt behaviour of the Tory government under Boris Johnson.

Controversy resurfaced at the inquiry as it resumed its work on 3 March with Module Five, which aims to analyse the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE), Covid tests and ventilators when the country was struck by the global coronavirus epidemic back in March 2020.

At the heart of this was the VIP lane. Government use of the VIP lane was challenged back in January 2022 by campaign groups the Good Law Project and EveryDoctor which argued the bid process conferred unlawful preferential treatment on those with political connections.

They took legal action over more than £340m in contracts awarded in 2020 to pest control firm PestFix and a contract worth around £252m to the hedge fund Ayanda Capital.

Brazen bid

The High Court ruled the use of the VIP lane was illegal.

Baroness Michelle Mone and her husband Doug Barrowman made a brazen last-minute bid to be core participants in this Module – a legal status which also gives the right to make state-

ments and apply to ask questions of witnesses.

PPE Medpro, led by Mr Barrowman, was awarded government contracts worth more than £200m during Covid after Baroness Mone recommended the firm to ministers.

The bid to be core participants was rejected by the inquiry's chair, Baroness Hallett.

However the Covid inquiry will hear in private detailed evidence about the multimillion-pound PPE contracts awarded, the inquiry chair has ruled.

The National Crime Agency has since May 2021 been investigating potential criminal offences committed in the procurement of the contracts awarded to the company, PPE Medpro, and argued that its investigation



Gove's role in VIP lane exposed. Left: coverage of Covid corruption in previous issues of MediaNorth

Conservative party grandee and former Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove's role in ensuring James Dyson was awarded a contract to provide 10,000 ventilators as part of the 'Ventilator Challenge'.

Preferential treatment

He received 'preferential treatment' in the awarding of that contract to his company during the pandemic, in an 'affront' to normal procurement rules, the report found.

'Dyson benefitted from preferential treatment' because Michael Gove, the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, issued 'an instruction' to place an order for the ventilators from Dyson in March, 2020. According to the Government Chief Commercial Officer, Mr Gove was 'insist-

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Covid inquiry resumes

● From Front Page

ent that an order be placed’.

Concern about the scope of the inquiry has been highlighted.

Bereaved families have accused the Covid inquiry of ‘protecting’ PPE suppliers from public scrutiny after saying it did not need to hear evidence from them to ‘investigate this issue thoroughly’.

It argued that it did not need to hear evidence from suppliers as ‘its focus is on how the gov-

ernment responded to suppliers’ offers’.

Naomi Fulop, from the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK group, called it an ‘inexplicable decision to protect these corporations from public scrutiny’.

She said it ‘smacks of a potential whitewash’ and that it made ‘achieving real justice for the Covid-19 bereaved families less likely’.

“While thousands died during the pandemic, suppliers of PPE were using government contacts to line their pockets,” Ms Fulop said. “The inquiry must hear from those suppliers directly.

“This might be the only chance we have to uncover the true extent of the corruption and profiteering that happened during the pandemic – the inquiry owes it to the bereaved families not to waste that chance.” **MN**

Reviewing the BBC’s Charter

Tom O’Malley puts forward some policy proposals to reform the BBC

The BBC’s Charter expires at the end of 2027. This year the government is reviewing the Charter’s provisions.

In a DCMS press statement, 29 November 2024, Secretary of State Lisa Nandy stated that:

“Through the Charter Review, we will have an honest national conversation about the broadcaster’s long-term future, ensuring the BBC has a sustainable public funding model that supports its vital work but is also fair and responsive to those who pay for it.”

At the time of writing it is not clear what form this ‘national conversation’ will take. When public service broadcasting is being undermined by the Right and big global media corporations, we need more than just a ‘conversation’.

It is now 40 years since the last major public inquiry into the aims and purposes of communications. And that one, the Peacock Report (1986), has had a negative impact ever since. It initiated policies that undermined public service broadcasting and

favoured under-regulated commercial competition. Successive governments have overseen the reduction of public service requirements in the commercial sector, and massive cuts to the BBC’s finances.

At present policy is created, effectively, behind closed doors and heavily influenced by corporate lobbyists. We need an open public inquiry into the future of the BBC and the regulation of other forms of communications.

Public service obligations

The Royal Charter should be replaced by a statute that establishes the BBC and public service obligations as central to our communications system. Inserting a far greater degree of accountability into the selection of those who run and appoint senior managers at the BBC will be crucial. The devolution of budgets and programming powers to the nations and regions in the UK is a much delayed and needed reform.

A new framework that does not include changing the commercial media regulator Ofcom



Lisa Nandy: “Honest national conversation”

will perpetuate current problems. Ofcom’s remit should be changed to prioritise public service communications; its governance should be reformed along the same lines as the BBC’s.

We need to tax the profits of the media giants and allocate that income to producing public service media. Regulations need to be tightened to make the BBC and other communications providers act with a proper regard to balance and impartiality. That would include overturning the close links between the main news organisations and the government on matters of foreign policy. The appalling pro-Israel coverage by broadcasters during the war on the Palestinians has been widely condemned.

Labour has an opportunity to make the Charter Review a meaningful public discussion

about the future of the BBC and the future regulation of communications.

Trade Unions, local political parties and other civil society organisations have a direct stake in communications. The policies they advocate and their capacity to get them implemented is influenced radically by the activities of the BBC and other communications organisations. Now is the time to get more systematically involved in campaigning for reforms in communications policy.

Pressure needs to be exerted to open up the debate and ensure that the changes which will come in in 2028 are genuinely progressive, not a repeat of the drive to a more marketised BBC operating in an ever-expanding, under-regulated, commercial environment. **MN**

Opinion

A democratic deficit

Nicholas Jones on the demise of the local press and the obstacles that face citizen reporters

A near collapse in local press reporting coupled with the inexorable growth in the influence of social media is transforming the way news and information is being received by communities up and down the country.

Increasingly organisations and undertakings across the public and voluntary sectors no longer have any experience – or expectation – of direct contact with local journalists.

Even the humblest group or institution maintains a website. For those of any size, their online presence is now the way they exercise total control over the release of information.

Time and again citizen and community reporters are discovering that there is no access to meetings or functions which in years gone by would have been reported at length by local evening and weekly newspapers.

Instead, release of news about such events is in the hands of the organisers with reports and photographs published on their own websites; through posts on media platforms like Facebook, or via news releases to local papers and other websites.

Having had to assume the entire responsibility for disseminating their own information they no longer welcome the presence of potentially intrusive reporters.

Any remaining journalists who operate within the vicinity, or who might wish to probe a little deeper, are viewed with

suspicion, an intrusion into a carefully managed public persona.

There seems to be no wish on the part of such organisations to relinquish – or to relax in any way – the control that they can now exercise through their ability to issue statements online.

Undertakings which employ full-time media officers are a case in point. Journalists are told to wait: once information and photographs are avail-

I am saddened to find that the first response of often young media officers is to refuse access

able, they will be published on the organisation's website.

As a volunteer reporter for a community website in outer London – where the weekly newspapers only hang on thanks in large part to advertising revenue from public notices – I find myself at a loss as to know how best to respond.

Back in the 1960s when I was pounding my patch, local journalists had some status within the community.

If late attending a parish council meeting, or some similar event, I recall being chided by the chairman for being late. The start of proceedings was

sometimes delayed until the press were present.

How times have changed!

In the decade I have spent as a volunteer reporter trying to fill the gaping democratic deficit left by the collapse of local news gathering, I have rarely if ever encountered a reporter from one of the free newspapers circulating in the area.

Their minimal staff are invariably desk-bound at a head office miles away, increasingly reliant on the news releases which are issued by local institutions and organisations.

My requests as a local journalist to attend events involving perhaps councillors, a mayor, or head of a school or college, are politely declined.

All too often the response is the same: "We shall be posting our own report online and sending out a news release. Please wait."

A more casual approach is equally unproductive. What about an interview? Back comes the reply that such access would only be granted if questions were submitted in advance and any written material or photographs

subject to full copy approval before publication.

As a life member of the National Union of Journalists I am saddened to find that the first response of often young media officers is to refuse access.

As a profession we are paying a terrible price for a catastrophic collapse in local news reporting.

The absence of journalists working their patch is no longer being noticed, and with it is going the collective memory of an older generation who remember how their local newspapers – and letters to the editor – played a vital role in keeping their communities abreast of

what was happening and who should be held to account.

MN



Fighting to keep UK indie news outlets alive

The Public Interest News Foundation (PINF) is running the second annual Indie News Week (INW) from 9th -15th June 2025 under the banner of 'No News is Bad News'.

Jonathan Heawood, Director of PINF, said: "At a time when we're all struggling to make



sense of the world, local indie news providers play a crucial role, informing and empowering communities across the UK.

"People need information and shared understandings to participate meaningfully in their communities, yet over four million Brits live in news deserts.

"Local news providers are meeting this challenge head on, by strengthening democracy, holding power to account, creating pride in place and fostering

civic participation. However, big tech greed and declining advertising mean that local providers are still having to fight to keep independent news alive.

"This week-long celebration of independent news outlets will consist of a range of activities organised within communities across the UK."

MN

Trump launches assault on the media

Granville Williams on how US President wants to curtail critical media coverage

Being a newspaper cartoonist can be controversial. In January a Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* cartoonist, Ann Telnaes, resigned from the paper after her cartoon was blocked.

She wrote a 4 January Substack piece, 'Why I am quitting *The Washington Post*', in which she described the cartoon's content:

"The cartoon that was killed criticizes the billionaire tech and media chief executives who have been doing their best to curry favor with incoming President-elect Trump. There have been multiple articles recently about these men with lucrative government contracts and an interest in eliminating regulations making their way to Mar-a-Lago. The group in the cartoon included Mark Zuckerberg/Facebook & Meta founder and CEO, Sam Altman/AI CEO, Patrick Soon-Shiong/LA *Times* publisher, the Walt Disney Company/ABC News, and Jeff Bezos/*Washington Post* owner."

She concludes, "As an editorial cartoonist, my job is to hold powerful people and institutions accountable. For the first time, my editor prevented me from doing that critical job. So I have decided to leave the *Post*. I doubt my decision will cause much of a stir and that it will be dismissed because I'm just a cartoonist. But I will not stop holding truth to power through my cartooning, because as they say, 'Democracy dies in darkness'"

Well, she was wrong about her resignation not causing 'much of a stir'. In the context of the *Washington Post* decision in October 2024 not to make a presidential endorsement for the first time in 36 years her action, and the blocked cartoon, prompted a wide-ranging discussion.

The Ann Telnaes cartoon

also stimulated discussion more broadly about what the impact of a Trump administration is having on the media. Yale Historian Timothy Snyder describes the process as 'anticipatory obedience'. In *On Tyranny*, Snyder writes: "Most of the power of authoritarianism is freely given. In times like these, individuals think ahead about what a more repressive government will want, and then offer themselves without being asked." Her cartoon captures exactly that process of anticipatory obedience by the Tech oligarchs.

Notorious confrontation

And the same applies to the Disney decision to settle a defamation lawsuit brought by Trump for \$15 million. And now Jeff Bezos, the *Washington Post*'s billionaire owner, has announced that his newspaper will only publish opinion pieces that reflect his personal ideology of 'personal liberties and free markets.'

As Democratic Party lawyer Marc E. Elias commented: "Knee bent. Ring kissed. Another legacy news outlet chooses obedience."

Trump is disrupting how the US media functions in other



Jeff Bezos. According to *Forbes*, he's the third richest individual in the world



The cartoon by Ann Telnaes blocked by the *Washington Post*

ways. Take that notorious confrontation in the White House between Zelensky, Trump and Vance which went out live on television.

Zelensky was asked "Why don't you wear a suit? You're at the highest level in this country's office, and you refuse to wear a suit. Just want to see if – do you own a suit?"

The questions came from Brian Glenn, a correspondent for Real America's Voice, a right-wing cable channel that has spread conspiracy theories about noncitizen voting.

His access was granted at the same time as the White House continued to block reporters from the Associated Press from attending.

When White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt announced the change to the press pool she claimed it's about 'giving the power back to the people'.

Previously, an independent group of journalists known as the White House Correspondents' Association was responsible for choosing the press pool. Now Trump's White House Press Team will choose which reporters are in the press pool - meaning that they will choose friendly reporters willing to amplify Trump's disinformation.

Trump has also launched mul-

tipleg legal attacks against major media outlets. CBS parent company Paramount is reportedly considering a settlement with Trump over his baseless claim that *60 Minutes* improperly edited an interview with Kamala Harris.

Using state power

Worse still, Trump appointee Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Chair Brendan Carr, who wrote a chapter on the FCC in Project 2025, wants to defund National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

Matthew Gertz, a senior fellow at Media Matters, is spot on: "What we're seeing is really an attack on freedom of speech and freedom of the press from all aspects of the Trump administration right now.

"This is the path that Viktor Orbán took in Hungary, where you use the power of the state to ensure that the media is compliant, that outlets are either curbed and become much less willing to be critical, or they are sold to owners who will make that happen," Gertz said.

"Obviously, this is the early stages of anything like that, but the signs that we're seeing right now are really quite disturbing."

Tim Gopsill argues that controversial film should be restored to iPlayer

BBC pulled war documentary on Gaza after 41 complaints

The BBC has brought shame upon itself by withdrawing the remarkable documentary *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone*, broadcast on 19 February. The programme told the story of three children surviving the onslaught with a strangely appealing blend of horror, level-headedness and humour.

In presenting Palestinians in a sympathetic light it was probably inevitable that pro-Israeli and right-wing groups would protest, and within a couple of days a letter from 41 notable Jewish people demanded the programme be withdrawn.

If the BBC had the confidence expected of a national broadcaster it would have defended itself. It didn't even try. Instead it threw itself to the ground and began rubbing its own face in the dirt.

The BBC is so scared of being accused of anti-semitism that its immediate response was to grovel. Perhaps that is not surprising, since it was a driving force in the media campaign to discredit and destroy the Labour Party leadership of Jeremy Corbyn (2015-19), which centred on false accusations of Jew hate among his followers.

No apology in 2019

In 2019 the BBC broadcast a documentary entitled *Is Labour Anti-semitic?* which attracted more than 1,500 complaints to Ofcom over the dishonest means by which it reached its guilty verdict. Many consider it one of the worst and most biased programmes in BBC history. The BBC did not apologise, nor pull the programme.

Perhaps it is institutional guilt over this episode that explains its apparent compulsion to beat itself up over supposed errors. This time it immediately apologised, pulled the show from the iPlayer, and reported its own story with embarrassing self-denunciation.



Photo: BBC

A graphic depiction of Israel's military campaign against Hamas, the two documentary makers behind the project are now facing criticism over the role of the child Abdullah al-Yazouri

Introducing an item on the *Today* programme, presenter Amol Rajan said there were 'huge failings' in the programme. No there weren't. It made one mistake: that it had failed to insist that the independent company that produced *How to Survive a Warzone*, Hoyo Films, should report on any political connections among the programme's narrators.

It turned out that the father of narrator Abdullah al-Yazouri, a cool and clever 13-year-old, had been deputy agriculture minister in the government of Gaza, where the party of government is Hamas.

The BBC requires everybody to regard Hamas simply as terrorists. The fact that it is the fairly elected government of Palestine is not widely appreciated, perhaps because this is not

The film covered horrific attacks on Gazans, but there were no hostile or abusive references to Israelis or Jews

reported except to undermine it, for example over its casualty figures. But although there is no evidence of any military involvement, this does designate Ayman al-Yazouri, an internationally-experienced agronomist, a terror chief. The BBC did ask Hoyo for checks but apparently did not receive the result. This is being looked into.

Abdullah al-Yazouri has explained that neither his father nor any other Gazan had any hand in the programme; the script was written by the producers. The storyline inevitably covered horrific attacks on Gazans and their homes, but there were no hostile or abusive references to Israelis or Jews. A couple of people are heard cursing Hamas, but that was it for politics.

The real fault of the programme is its affection for the Gazans. It humanises them, not as rabid terrorists but courageous and resourceful people. We can't have that!

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy said she was 'deeply shocked and disappointed' and called the programme 'a serious error'. She had 'made clear that the BBC must be held robustly to account'. Is it

not supposed to be independent from government?

Palestine film wins Oscar

It was the BBC's bad luck that a couple of weeks after the broadcast another, much harder-hitting film on Palestine won the documentary category at the Oscars, no less. *No Other Land* tells a slow and agonising story of a West Bank village being steadily destroyed via incessant attacks from the occupying forces and marauding armed Israeli settlers. Again, the stoical spirit of the villagers is inspiring.

Worse still, it was a joint production of Israeli and Palestinian film-makers. The BBC could never show such a thing, but Channel 4 grabbed it and aired it a week later. No-one has apologised. It is still accessible on the C4 website, and indeed *How to Survive a Warzone* is easily accessible online as well.

Far more Jewish people (well over 1,000) have now demanded that it be restored to the iPlayer than ever complained. Whatever turns out to be the truth about the commissioning, the important thing is that it should be shown.

Now we'll never know

Tim Gopsill on the Prince Harry / Rupert Murdoch court case

Prince Harry's hotly anticipated court case against the Murdoch press was stopped at the last minute as he accepted £10 million in compensation for intrusions into his privacy by *The Sun*.

News Group Newspapers (NGN) admitted illegal actions on the part of *The Sun* – which it had been resisting for years – and offered an 'unequivocal' apology. Harry could claim a 'monumental victory', but it was a sad defeat for open justice.

Since 2011, when, after years of denial, NGN's *News of the World* was finally revealed by *The Guardian* to have hacked the phone of murdered teenager Milly Dowler, there have been persistent demands to uncover the whole truth of the phone-hacking campaign.

A full-scale public inquiry was set up under Lord Justice Leveson, and the Metropolitan Police was forced to investigate. Naturally Leveson could not take evidence on matters coming to court – he announced there would be a second stage of his inquiry later – and police who enjoyed close relationships with Murdoch journalists dragged their feet on their enquiries.

There was in 2013-14 a 10-month criminal trial at which five journalists and junior executives at the *News of the World* were jailed; the top bosses miraculously escaped. The trial largely concerned payments to public servants for stories at the *News of the World* only.

But victims of hacking at both papers began lining up civil cases by the dozen. Every single one of these was bought out by Murdoch to prevent cases being aired in court. In all he is reported to have paid more than £1 billion to protect his secrets.



Prince Harry: Royal victim

Then along came Harry, presented as having pockets deep enough to fork out the six-figure sums demanded by greedy lawyers and resist those offered by the Murdochs.

But on 22 January, only 16 minutes before the case was due to open at the Royal Courts of Justice in London and after reportedly 48 hours of non-stop negotiation, Harry folded. Perhaps he really needed the mon-

ey: the Sussexes are not the draw they once were, as Americans tire of their tedious self-promotional activities.

Murdoch had to admit more than before, but there are no further cases lined up to consider it. No evidence would be heard on the scale of the 13-year cover-up.

Meanwhile Leveson's inquiry stands no chance of resuming. Despite being promised by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2012, his various Tory successors all turned it down, and Keir Starmer's Labour administration has unsurprisingly broken its commitment to follow through. The last thing that Starmer wants to do is upset the right-wing press.

It is the end of the line. No-one in power wants the light of day on this murky tale. It has been a 'deep state' operation if ever there was one: an alliance of the two main political parties, the royal family, the police and the entire national media – except *The Guardian* – has succeeded in keeping the full truth about a massive criminal conspiracy away from the public eye. **MN**

Letter to the Editor

Another view of the miners' strike

Many thanks for the winter edition of *Media-North*. I very much appreciate the coverage of so many under-publicised items. However, I get weary of the glamourising of the miners' strike. Far from being a valiant revolt against Thatcher and the Conservative government it was a Quixotic, badly led, badly organised and doomed charge of a modern-day Light Brigade.

I have no time for Conservative governments – indeed I have fought them for 67 years – and I regard the right-wing press as deceitful anti-union propagandists, but the 1984-85 miners' strike played into their hands. The key analysis and critique of Arthur Scargill's leadership came not from the Right but directly from the Left, notably from Jimmy Reid on Channel 4 in January 1985.

Once Scargill and the union's leadership prevented a vote



Peter Brookes, *The Times* – From *The Art of Class War: Newspaper Cartoons and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike*

of members on the strike, the cause was lost. One key tenet of unionism is that members in strong positions have to maintain solidarity with their weaker brethren and therefore, if the full vote had gone in favour of the strike, which it could well have done, the Nottingham and Derbyshire miners would have come

out in support and the strike would have had the legitimacy and potency it lacked.

The other key facet of the strike that never gets adequate publicity is the difference between the police behaviour in South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. As far as I have seen, every time police violence against striking miners is publicised it is from South Yorkshire, even though the number of pits in each county was roughly equal.

The brutality of the South Yorkshire force and its Metropolitan police extras was a huge propaganda boost for the strike and understandably added to the myth of a justified strike that was defeated by huge police force action in support of the Thatcher government.

By contrast the West Yorkshire Chief Constable, Colin Sampson, refused to admit Met officers into the county and ended the mass use of riot shields and hel-

metts which, he rightly believed, would provoke the striking miners with whom his force had to maintain relations for the future. This needs to be noted.

The last point is that one of Scargill's main points was the need to save viable pits for the future jobs for miners' sons and grandsons. In the 1960s, in my early days representing Armley citizens on the Leeds City Council, I had quite a number of miners as constituents. Not a single one wanted their sons to go down the pit. So, please, can we have a more rigorous analysis from the Left on what was certainly a very significant event for trade unionism.

Michael Meadowcroft
Leeds

Many of the points raised in Michael Meadowcroft's letter are controversial – for example, Jimmy Reid's intervention. We're happy to print short, cogent responses to his letter. – Editor **MN**

Paul Routledge has praise for a 'thoughtful revealing account' of treatment of striking miners by the media

The glory, the suffering and the battles

WHEN Britain declares war, which it did all too often in the last century, an official artist was appointed to record the glory, the suffering and the battles.

But when an industrial dispute takes on the nature of a civil war, the authorities have no interest in pictures of the combatants. In the absence of government-sponsored art, we have only the black-and-white cartoons of the period, from Fleet Street and regional newspapers, trade union journals, posters and small-circulation Left-wing news-sheets.

Nicholas Jones, Labour Correspondent for BBC Radio during the strike, has done us a great service by bringing together more than 120 of these cartoons, in a narrative of the dispute that consistently seeks to get to the truth.

It was clear from the start that the miners could expect no mercy from the editors, leader writers, the columnists and even the correspondents of the Tory-aligned nationals. They knew whose side they were on, and it wasn't the striking pitmen and their families.

Cartoonists, too, sang from the same hymn sheet, whether from personal beliefs or practical considerations. There was no point in offering a pro-Scargill drawing to *The Sun* or the *Daily Express* (which had once given a fair hearing to the NUM, when it was led by Joe Gormley in the 1972 strike).

Some of these portrayals are well-pointed, and hit home at the weaknesses of the strike. Some are funny, as cartoons are meant to be, as well as trenchant commentary. Take Trog – real name Wally Fawkes – in *The Observer*

THE ART OF CLASS WAR

Newspaper Cartoonists and the 1984/85 Miners' Strike

By **Nicholas Jones**

Published by CPBF North
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when the return to work was gathering pace. A woman pushing a buggy, with the toddler shouting "Scab!" says to her fellow women protesters: "He's said his first word!"

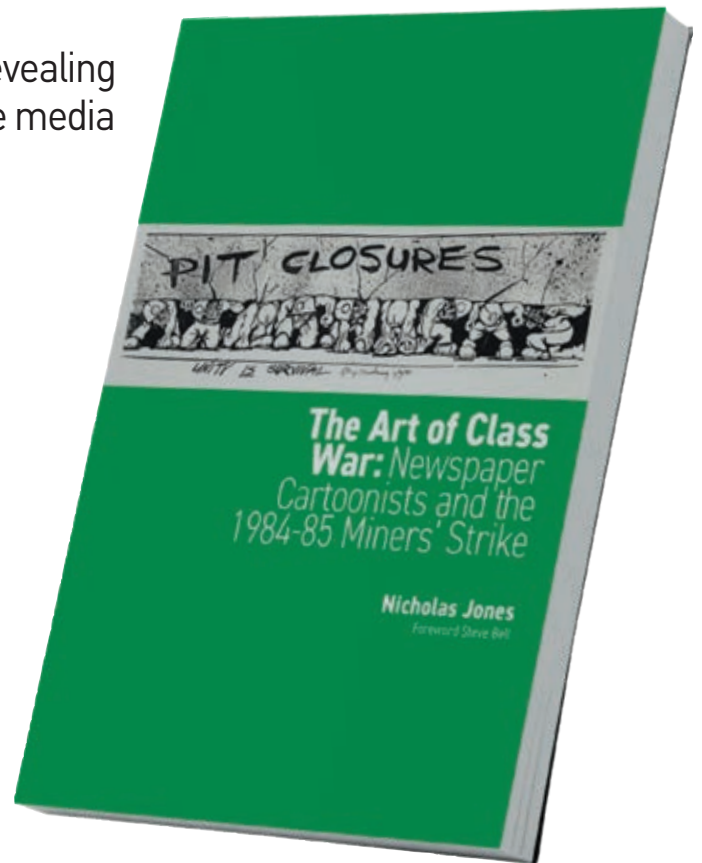
Kremlin's puppet

Others are nasty, personal and viciously political: crude propaganda. Possibly the worst, and most damaging, was the succession of cartoons depicting Scargill as a puppet of the Kremlin.

One, by Michael Cummings in the *Daily Express*, showed an ageing Leonid Brezhnev in a wheelchair, applauding a picture of Scargill holding a cutlass and banners saying "I will destroy the British Coal Industry! I march against Britain!" The giant portrait is held by two Nazi-style guards, at the end of a Gallery of Honour of British spies including Philby, McLean, Burgess and Blunt. The caption reads: "British spies are superb, but they're nothing as helpful as Comrade Scargill."

Jones notes that Scargill singles out Cummings, lead cartoonist of

A photograph that showed a canister of hair lacquer in Scargill's briefcase, took satire to grotesque new levels



the *Express*, for bitter criticism for attempting to isolate him from the support of coalfield communities. "Constantly depicting him as a stooge of the Soviets was intended to drive a wedge between the rank and file and their leader, raising doubts about his true motives," he writes.

"More importantly, they would reinforce what would become a developing attack line of Mrs Thatcher and the Conservative press that Scargill's Soviet links were a threat to British democracy."

The anti-democracy theme also surfaced regularly over the issue of a pithead ballot for the dispute. The NUM executive authorised the strike as official, as each coalfield came out in sympathy with Yorkshire, without a national ballot as required by the rule book. The High Court took a different view, ruling that it was unofficial, opening the way to fines and sequestration of NUM funds.

Cartoonists' goldmine

This was a gold-mine for the cartoonists. Stanley Franklin in *The Sun* drew a picture of miners with picks and drills trying to get into Scargill's head saying, "We will never get through to him" against a placard of 'Moderates at Work! Call to Scargill For Ballot!'

Some were just plain cruel,

like Noel Ford in the *Daily Star* as the strike crumbled, showing a miner bent double under a great black cloud of Despair, Hunger Debt and Divided Loyalties, with Scargill admonishing him: "You should be ashamed – giving in just when I'm winning."

Scargill was a gift to cartoonists, and, as Jones points out, a photograph in the *Daily Mirror* that showed a canister of hair lacquer in his briefcase, took their satire to grotesque new levels.

Peter Brookes in *The Times* drew the NUM president with a flying comb-over, his bald patch tattooed 'Soviet Repression', reading a *Which?* Report on Baldness. I wonder how many of the cartoonists were getting thin on top? Certainly, their sense of humour was.

I have only room to select a few, but you get the general picture. We must be grateful that Nicholas Jones has completed it for us in this thoughtful, revealing account that adds greatly to the literature of the strike.

Paul Routledge was Political columnist with the *Daily Mirror* until his recent retirement

To buy a copy of *The Art of Class War* for £12 (incl p&p) contact cpbfnorth@outlook.com **MN**

Coming Events*Sheffield
Festival
of Debate***MEDIANORTH ONLINE EVENT**
Thursday 8 May 6.00-7.30pm**Framed: The Demonisation
of Disability**

This event will look at the government's plans to slash benefits and how this is covered in the media. Most importantly it will also look at ways these plans can be challenged.

We have two expert speakers: Dr Rachel Broady, a journalist and academic at Liverpool John Moores University who wrote the NUJ Guidelines Reporting Poverty, and Associate Professor in Journalism Studies at the University of Stirling, John Harrison, also a former journalist. He wrote *Scroungers: Moral Panics and Media Myths*.

Booking for this free online event will be live in April at: <https://festivalofdebate.com>

*South
Yorkshire
Festival***Cartoonists, the Socialist Press
and the Miners' Strike**

We'll be back again at the South Yorkshire Festival with our regular event in the Unison Room at Wortley Hall on Sunday 10 August 2.00-3.30pm.

Nick Jones, author of *The Art of Class War*, will be speaking about how cartoonists for the left press – *Militant*, *Socialist Worker*, *Newsline*, *Morning Star* – tried to boost support during the strike and fight back against the highly paid cartoonists of the Conservative press.

Jane Ingham will also speak about the recently published book *Need Not Greed* (Bluecoat Press £45), a collection of the cartoons of Alan Hardman of *Militant*.

Both *The Art of Class War* and *Need Not Greed* will be on sale at this event. **MN**



Photo: Sue Williams

Nick Jones, Granville Williams and Steve Bell at the launch of *The Art of Class War*

Great reception at launch of new book

The launch for the new book *The Art of Class War*, held in the City Room, Leeds Playhouse, was a great success. Steve Bell, who wrote the foreword, reviewed the strip cartoons he did for *The Guardian* during the strike. In his often very amusing presentation, he also talked about the other

work he did to support the strike.

Nick Jones told how he amassed his vast collection of material on the strike, much of it now archived at Sheffield University. A selection of about 130 cartoons are in the book out of the several hundred he collected.

The question and answer session was also really good, with

the audience actively contributing comments and questions. Jon and Jane Ingham described how Alan Hardman, the cartoonist for *Militant*, worked and how they put together his collection of cartoons in *Need Not Greed*. The feedback from the audience after the event was terrific. **MN**

Former BBC Newsreader's anguish over Gaza

The controversy about the BBC Gaza documentary (see Page 5) also produced an open letter from Artists for Palestine UK signed by more than 1,000 people including Gary Lineker.

One signatory was Karishma Patel, a former BBC Newsreader.

Karishma wrote a well-argued column in *The Independent* (5 March), 'I'm a former BBC newsreader – Gaza is the reason I resigned'. Here's a quote from her column:

"I was at the BBC for five years, starting out as a researcher and eventually becoming a newsreader and journalist. ... To

see such overwhelming evidence every day and then hear 50/50 debates on Israel's conduct – this is what created the biggest rift between my commitment to truth and the role I had to play as a BBC journalist. We have passed the point at which Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity are debatable." **MN**

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