



White House Deputy Chief of Staff, Stephen Miller, on Fox News 12 September

(Screenshot from Fox News)

Trump's grab for power

Plans to silence opponents being prepared

By Granville Williams

Donald Trump's intentions are now very clear. What were once seen as the solid structures which sustained democracy in the USA are now crumbling as he seeks to destroy or neuter institutions which stand in his way.

That's why he has targeted the courts, the universities, civil servants of the federal government, as well as individuals like John Bolton and Federal Reserve governor Liz Cook.

One bulwark which has also crumbled under assault is the media.

In the run-up to his election we saw papers like the *Washington Post* decide not to endorse any candidate and its owner Jeff Bezos donated \$1m, along with Mark Zuckerberg and other tech CEOs to Trump's inauguration fund.

In February 2025 Bezos curtailed the scope of views on the

Post's opinion pages to only advocate for 'personal liberties and free markets' and exclude opposing views.

Lawsuits against ABC News and the CBS news programme *60 Minutes* for its interview with Kamala Harris were also settled respectively for \$15 million and \$16 million.

Since then CBS has appointed an ombudsman to ensure 'unbiased journalism' – Kenneth R. Weinstein, a former president and CEO of the Hudson Institute, a public policy think tank that has received funding from the Koch family, and an adviser to the Trump administration.

\$15bn lawsuit

Trump's latest target is the *New York Times*. On 16 September he brought a \$15bn defamation and libel lawsuit against *The Times* which he has described as 'one of the worst and most degenerate newspapers in the history of our country'.

In a post on Truth Social, the president accused the newspaper of being a 'mouthpiece' for the Democratic Party as he criticised its endorsement of Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential race as 'the single largest illegal Campaign contribution, EVER'.

The lawsuit came less than a week after *The Times* reported on and printed a crude birthday note given to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, which bears Trump's signature.

But a more intense assault on free speech is now underway in the wake of the shooting of the right-wing activist Charlie Kirk.

Trump adviser Stephen Miller singled out left-wing organisations that he baselessly alleged were promoting violence in the United States and he said that the full weight of the federal government would soon come down on them.

"We are going to use every resource we have at the De-

partment of Justice, Homeland Security, and throughout this government to identify, disrupt, dismantle, and destroy these networks and make America safe again for the American people," he said.

Free speech?

Shortly after this, Attorney General Pam Bondi appeared on the podcast hosted by Miller's wife, Katie Miller. "There's free speech and then there's hate speech, and there is no place, especially now, especially after what happened to Charlie, in our society," Bondi said.

Vice President Vance has singled out George Soros's Open Society Foundations and the Ford Foundation and said both benefited from a 'generous tax treatment'. He wrongly accused Soros's foundations and the Ford Foundation of funding *The Nation* magazine, which he attacked over its coverage of Kirk's death.

MN



Photo: Flickr

DCMS Secretary of State Lisa Nandy meets Hacker T Dog on a visit to Media City Manchester

After speculation about her position in recent months, Lisa Nandy kept her job as Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in Keir Starmer's recent reshuffle. **Tom O'Malley** asks

Who decides the future of the BBC?

The legal framework governing the BBC, its Royal Charter, expires on 31 December 2027. Later this year the Government will publish a Green Paper on the future of the Corporation. It will be a key part of the procedure for reviewing the Charter organised by the DCMS.

But who will influence this process? The public, or the big media lobbying organisations and the BBC-baiting press and social media? Should we be worried? We should. The BBC is a crucial part of our mass media. 74% of UK adults use BBC News on average each week, well ahead of competitors. The BBC News App is number 1 in the UK. The Corporation contributed about £4.9 billion to the UK economy last year. People over 16 watch an average of 6 hours 34 minutes per week of streamed video on demand, more than the combined total of all the other big streamers.

Licence fee income totalled £3.8 billion in 2024/25. At £174.50 a year it is considerably cheaper than its competitors given the range of services provided by the BBC.

23.8 million people still pay

the Licence Fee. According to the BBC annual report this is a 1% decrease year over last year. But, again, given the ferocity of the competition and the doom-laden predictions that the Licence Fee is no longer tenable, this is pretty impressive. Nonetheless, Lisa Nandy recently queried whether the Licence Fee has a future, and is looking, among other things, at subscription as a way of financing the organisation.

Recently the BBC has been criticised because of the way it has systematically misrepresented the war on Gaza and the genocide by giving far more weight to Israeli than Palestinian perspectives. In spite of this bias, Lisa Nandy asked why nobody at the BBC was sacked over the showing of the documentary *Gaza: to Survive A War Zone*, a

programme deemed by the Corporation's critics as far too pro-Palestinian.

Firmer commitment

Nandy joins a long line of politicians who have attacked BBC management. Thatcher effectively got rid of the Director General, Alisdair Milne, in the 1980s because he was not as co-operative as she wished, and the Blair government Greg Dyke over coverage of the invasion of Iraq.

The Tory press also take any opportunity available to slam the Corporation, mainly because it is a public service organisation.

We need a better BBC, making and promoting a wide range of services, with more independence from government and a firmer commitment to representing fairly all sides in political and cultural debates. That's why the upcoming Charter review is so important.

The timetable has not been published but we know that soon the DCMS will publish the terms of reference for the review, followed by the Green Paper, setting out policy options. We have no information about who the officials and Ministers have been

talking to about the review and how those conversations are influencing policy.

The government will invite responses to the Green Paper and conduct a public consultation. But it does not mean setting up a public inquiry into the future of public service communications in a rapidly changing environment. That would stimulate widespread input and debate, which no doubt they would rather avoid.

After the consultation it will publish a White Paper outlining what it intends to do plus a summary of consultation responses. It will then produce a draft Charter for debate in Parliament and subsequently publish the final version ready for implementation on 1 January 2028.

Clear timetable

Although Ministers and officials plan to 'consult' with the devolved governments, they seem to have no plans to involve systematically the wider public in open discussion, not just polling. This can only be done by a high profile, public inquiry, with precise terms and a clear timetable, canvassing the widest possible range of perspectives.

As it stands, companies with the biggest clout, lobbyists with the ear of officials and the big noises in commercial media, will be framing policy.

We need to know who Ministers and officials have been talking to in the run up to the Green Paper. These conversations have been on a matter of public policy, so nobody should be concerned about the publication of this information.

Our trade unions, politicians, devolved governments, local and regional authorities and civil society organisations must press the government to open the review to public scrutiny and debate. Otherwise this vital, if flawed, institution will be further eroded, cut back and commercialised.

Look at countries like the USA where public service communications have long been marginalised and be warned. **MN**

Tom O'Malley has written extensively about the BBC, beginning with Closedown: The BBC and Government Broadcasting Policy 1979-92 in 1994.

Lisa Nandy is looking, among other things, at subscription as a way of financing the organisation

Bare-faced union-busting at TikTok in London and Berlin

Tony Burke reports on the tactics being used by TikTok to block union membership

Workers at TikTok's London Farringdon offices and their union, the Communication Workers Union United Tech and Allied Workers (CWU UTAW) branch, said that TikTok's recently announced redundancies are an act of 'union-busting' that will put 'millions of British users at risk'. TikTok, and its parent company ByteDance, announced big job losses on 22 August with a significant reduction in the platform's vital moderation teams.

Hundreds of moderators and other Trust and Safety workers at the London-based offices have joined the CWU UTAW Branch. Activists and the CWU are engaged in building union membership, and organising TikTok workers seeking union recognition.

Arrangements had been put in place for a voluntary ballot to be held on union recognition but, after announcing the redundancies, ByteDance wrote to the CWU saying: "Given these exceptional circumstances, we have decided that it is necessary for us to suspend the planned voluntary ballot process with immediate effect."

Alternatives to human work

Alongside concerns ranging from workplace stress to a lack of clarity over questions such as pay scales and office attendance policy, workers have also raised concerns over the quality of artificial intelligence (AI) in content moderation, believing such 'alternatives' to human work to be too vulnerable and ineffective to maintain TikTok user safety.

Commenting on the redundancies, the CWU National Officer for Tech, John Chadfield,



TikTok protest against redundancies

said: "The timing is deliberate, and it is deliberately cruel. It is bare-faced union-busting, leaves the members who have organised facing massive uncertainty and, from what we can see, they are just going to be offshoring these jobs to a third-party in Lisbon.

"TikTok workers have long been sounding the alarm over the real-world costs of cutting human moderation teams in favour of hastily developed, immature AI alternatives. This has been a constant concern throughout the process of TikTok workers' efforts to form a union.

"The unionisation of TikTok is inevitable. They might want to delay it in the most spiteful way possible, but it is inevitable."

TikTok workers in Berlin – members of the services, media and tech union ver.di – who took strike action to demand collec-

tive agreement and union rights are also facing big job losses among Moderation and Trust and Safety staff.

Since the strike action, TikTok's German management has been busy spreading misinformation within the company about German strike law and announced 'one-on-one talks with employees'. ver.di had already denounced this as an attempt at intimidation.

Locked out of system

One employee who works outside of the Moderation and Trust and Safety team, but who took strike action, was immediately locked out of all system access. This suspension has since been lifted, but she is to be made redundant.

"Out of a team of more than 30 employees, it is precisely the colleague who took part in the strike who is to be fired. This reeks to high heaven, and we find the alleged business justifications completely unconvincing. We call on TikTok to immediately refrain from the dismissal and finally enter into constructive negotiations with ver.di on the demanded social collective agreement," says Kathlen Eggerling, the trade

union secretary responsible for ver.di's media sector in Berlin-Brandenburg.

Commenting on the developments in London and Berlin, James Bowen, Branch Secretary of the Unite London Digital & Tech Branch, which also organises digi-tech workers in companies such as Google, Microsoft and others, said: "AI is now a massive issue in all sectors of the UK economy. At the recent Unite Conference there were more motions on AI than any other subject. What is happening in TikTok in Germany reflects the shape of things to come. The ver.di union is right to demand a collective agreement. Content moderators are required to have knowledge of the country they are in – the language, the social situation, customs and understandings. They have to deal with violent, offensive, fake, racist and pornographic content. They are low paid and have precarious employment. To add insult to injury, the German workers apparently trained the AI systems which will replace them." **MN**

Tony Burke has written articles on unions trying to organise TikTok for Yorkshire Bylines

To add insult to injury, workers apparently trained the AI systems which will replace them

How the *Telegraph* helps Reform

Over the summer months Nigel Farage issued a series of incendiary policy statements projecting a vision of a broken Britain. **Julian Petley** focuses on the role of one newspaper

There are two particularly striking features of the current backlash against the Online Safety Act (OSA). The first is that the newspapers leading the fray, particularly the *Daily Telegraph*, have advocated online censorship ever since the World Wide Web became available to the public in 1993.

More specifically, they vociferously welcomed the Internet Strategy Green Paper, published in June 2018, in which the OSA's origins lie. The only aspects of this to which they took exception were those relating to outlawing dis- and misinformation, but ferocious lobbying by the News Media Association and the Society of Editors ensured that no effective protections were included in the resultant legislation – the Online Harms Bill, which eventually mutated into the OSA.

The second notable feature of the backlash is that it has been driven by Reform, greatly aided by supportive coverage in the *Telegraph*, on the grounds that it constitutes a serious threat to freedom of expression. But free speech concerns did not prevent the party banning from its conference publications which it

dislikes on ideological grounds – such as *Byline Times* and *The New World* – and Nottinghamshire County Council announcing that it would no longer deal with the *Nottingham Post*, its online edition and the team of BBC-funded local democracy journalists that it manages.

The OSA does indeed give cause for concern when it comes to freedom of expression and matters of personal privacy and security online, as organisations such as the Open Rights Group and Index on Censorship have repeatedly pointed out. There is also the matter of its utterly inadequate protections against dis- and misinformation.

Attack on the Tories

However, the OSA is barely recognisable in Reform's onslaught on it, whose main purpose is to attack the Tories for introducing it in the first place and the government for enacting it, and to propagandise on behalf of a hyper-populist form of free speech fundamentalism which has been imported from the US and which is in many ways diametrically opposed to the human rights-based model of the UK and the EU.

The OSA's requirement for sites containing pornography



Exaggerated report claims Palestinian protests make London a no-go area at weekends

to be subject to age-verification (which is indeed problematic in certain respects) has been an absolute gift for Reform. Doubtless many of its members and supporters are amongst the 14m adults who, according to Ofcom, visit porn sites, but this is not Reform's ostensible concern.

Thus in the *Telegraph*, 26 July, Zia Yusuf, the head of the party's so-called 'Department of Government Efficiency' alleged that 'content critical of government immigration policy – including

videos of public protests outside migrant hotels – is quietly being censored from social media' and that 'if you're under 18, you'll be blocked from seeing "harmful" content – which, in practice, means anything critical of the Government'.

Anyone with even the slightest knowledge of the OSA would know that this is arrant nonsense – indeed classic misinformation – since there is nothing in the OSA to require blocking of such material, but that did not stop the paper running an article by Nigel Farage three days later which simply repeated the same untruths while adding a few more distortions of its own. For example:

"These apparently well-intentioned checks enforce mandatory ID scans, not just for porn sites, but also for mainstream social media where political or any other content is deemed potentially 'harmful'. This erosion

OSA's requirement for sites containing pornography to be subject to age-verification has been an absolute gift for Reform



The *Telegraph* story 'One in 12 in London is illegal migrant' was inaccurate, IPSO found in August 2025



Elon Musk and other tech giants wary of online regulation

of privacy could make it easier to identify online critics of government policy on migration and much else."

Both politicians promised to repeal the OSA when Reform came to power.

It is, of course, quite possible that such material could be blocked by over-zealous algorithmic

activity, given that online companies may be unfamiliar with the actual requirements of the new legislation and are being over-cautious, particularly given the considerable penalties for infringing the OSA.

Deliberately over-blocking

Only a cynic would suggest that Elon Musk, a sworn enemy of online regulation of any kind, and who, as a *Telegraph* headline announced on 28 July, regards the OSA as 'suppression of the people', could have adjusted X's algorithms so as deliberately to trigger over-blocking and thus bring the Act into disrepute.

Entirely unsurprisingly, the American tech giants that dominate the online world, always hyper-sensitive to threats of regulation by those pesky Europeans, immediately seized upon these distorted stories and began to issue threats of retaliation.

But what is so remarkable is

the role played here by Reform and Tory politicians and a 'news-paper' that incessantly bang the patriotic drum and accuse the left of 'talking down' Britain. Here the *Telegraph* has really outdone itself in vassalage to the US.

For example, an article on 30 July by its deputy US editor, headed 'White House warns Starmer: stop threatening US tech companies' free speech', quotes with undisguised relish a senior US State Department official telling the paper that 'we have taken decisive action against foreign actors who have engaged in extraterritorial censorship affecting our companies and fellow citizens. We will continue to monitor developments in the UK with great interest and concern'.

It has also established a symbiotic relationship with Republican congressman Jim Jordan, chair of the House Judiciary Committee, repeatedly quoting, entirely unchallenged, his ill-informed remarks about British (and EU) online regulation. Indeed, on 18 August it ran a whole article by him and two other Republican members of his committee. This was headlined, 'We led a delegation to investigate Europe's targeting of free speech. What we saw shocked us', with the strapline: 'Instead of fixing a surging migrant crisis and stagnant economy, the UK and EU are even trying to censor American critics of their policies'. With respect to the OSA specifically it claims, entirely wrong-headedly, that it 'requires large social media platforms to assess and "mitigate" – that is, censor – content that includes undefined categories of so-called disinformation and hate speech'.

In fact, 'hate speech' is not mentioned once in the Act, and, as noted earlier, thanks to relentless lobbying by the News Media

Association, it contains virtually nothing effective outlawing dis- or misinformation.

Also significant in the context of fealty to the US is a *Telegraph* article on 13 August, headed 'US warns of "serious restrictions" on free speech in Britain', with the strapline: 'State department report reveals concerns over free speech and says UK's "human rights situation worsened" the year that Labour came to power'.

This lavished entirely uncritical coverage on the US state department's annual Human Rights Report which claimed that, following the Southport murders last year, the UK Government 'repeatedly intervened to chill speech' and that 'censorship of ordinary Britons was increasingly routine, often targeted at political speech'.

This, again is entirely misinformed, but the report's mention of Southport provides the paper with yet another opportunity to propagandise on behalf of its secular saint and martyr Lucy Connolly (gaoled for 31 months for inciting racial hatred in the wake of the Southport killings) and Adam Smith-Connor (convicted of breaching buffer zones outside UK abortion clinics, another issue that obsesses Americans of a certain stripe), although neither of these was convicted under the OSA, which anyway had not come fully into force at the time these crimes were committed.

Ideological crusaders

The inclusion of these cases illustrates all too clearly the ideological causes which lie behind the anti-OSA crusade, which take us a long way beyond online regulation.

In right-wing papers, the mis-reporting of laws relating to online content is already beginning to echo that constituting their decades-long campaign against the European Convention on Human Rights, which is now very considerably shifting up a gear. And, very far from coincidentally, Reform has made absolutely clear its utter determination to drag this country out of the Convention if it comes to power.

The question is: do we really want these matters, which are central to all our lives, determined by Reform and its cheerleaders in the press and on GB News?

The inclusion of these cases illustrate all too clearly the ideological causes which lie behind the anti-OSA crusade

The language war on migrants

Indigo Crane
on a timely new
report which
highlights how the
media demonises
asylum seekers

The Runnymede Trust has spent more than 50 years challenging structural racism in Britain and produces authoritative research to equip citizens and policymakers with the tools to deliver genuine progress towards racial justice.

Its latest report, *A Hostile Environment: Language, Race, Surveillance and the Media*, is a study of immigration debates between 2010 and 2024 in both Parliament and the press. The conclusion is clear: language can be a weapon. Whether consciously or not, the words chosen by politicians and journalists shape public perception, and, too often, they do so in ways that incite hostility.

The researchers analysed two datasets: 62.7 million words across 52,990 news articles and 317 House of Commons debates on immigration between 2019 and 2024. One finding stands out. ‘Illegal’ remains the word most closely linked to ‘immigrants’. Likewise, ‘asylum seekers’ are overwhelmingly discussed in relation to accommodation, fueling narratives that cast them as drains on national resources.

This rhetoric has real-world effects: hotels and other accommodation sites have become targets for public anger. Dr Shabna Begum, CEO of the Trust, is blunt in her assessment. “Mainstream narratives, uncritically recycled and compounded by the media, create the conditions in which migrants and people seeking asylum in this country are routinely and actively demonised and dehumanised. Whether it is Starmer reaching back to Powellite rhetoric in his ‘island of strangers’ speech, or MPs imagining the public safety threat posed by Muslim

women’s clothing, words have consequences.”

Those consequences are measurable. YouGov polling shows that almost half of Britons (47%) believe there are more people living in the UK illegally than legally, a perception wildly at odds with reality. In fact, around 10.7 million people in the UK were born abroad, compared with an estimated 1.3 million without legal status.

Yet roughly a third of respondents even said they would support halting migration entirely and forcing many recent arrivals to leave. Amnesty International accuses the government of “choosing to pour fuel on the fire of dangerous narratives, instead of taking action to address racism and hostility.”

Examples of how this rhetoric seeps into politics are abundant. In July, *The Guardian* reported on a Reform UK press conference where a council leader described a man awaiting trial as ‘the

“There’s a more angry electorate, and there’s too many politicians willing to use lurid language”

Daily Express front pages illustrate the way the paper promotes hostility against migrants



criminal’, prior to any conviction. When asked about the possible breach of contempt laws, Nigel Farage defended the remark, calling it ‘good’ that the councillor was ‘slightly emotional’.

Former Labour justice secretary Charlie Falconer warns that the tone has shifted drastically: “The language is much, much worse than it ever was five years ago. There’s a more angry electorate, and there’s too many politicians willing to use lurid language.”

The government itself is hardly immune to this dynamic. A later *Guardian* article examined Labour’s proposal to require police to reveal suspects’ ethnicities in certain cases, a move intended to minimise misinformation after civil unrest in Southport last summer following false claims about the attacker’s religion and asylum status spreading rapidly online, causing riots.

Yet critics warn that such a policy risks legitimising race as a relevant factor in the justice system, putting ethnicity at the centre of public scrutiny rather than the crime itself. The Runnymede Trust’s research suggests impartiality on these matters is already vanishingly rare.

Nor are these dynamics limited to parliament. The BBC recently apologised to shadow justice secretary Robert Jenrick after controversy over comments he made about immigration. Jenrick had claimed he would not want his daughters living ‘near men from backward countries who broke into Britain illegally about whom you know next to nothing’.

Dr Krishna Kandiah, founder of the Sanctuary Foundation, condemned the remarks on BBC’s *Thought for Today*, saying Jenrick had: “... increased the fear of the stranger” for which “the technical term is xenophobia. All phobias are, by definition, irrational. Nevertheless, they have a huge impact.”

The thread linking all these episodes is the same: language matters. Political speech and media narratives do more than reflect public opinion; they shape it and can distort it.

The gap between perception and reality in Britain’s immigration debate shows just how powerful language can be. And, as the Runnymede Trust warns, until politicians and journalists recognise that words have consequences, hostility will remain the dominant frame through which immigration is seen. **MN**

Indigo Crane is a final year student at Durham University reading English, and plans to study for a Masters degree in Journalism after graduation. She is spending six months working with MediaNorth.

Another report from Runnymede

The Runnymede Trust published its first report on this issue earlier this year: *A Hostile Environment: Language, Race, Politics and the Media*. You can read both reports on their website - www.runnymedetrust.org

Granville Williams on a new book which dissects the news we consume

Understanding the mess our media is in

BREAKING

How the Media Works, When It Doesn't, And Why It Matters

By Mic Wright

Published by Blink £20.00

Mic Wright is a journalist with 20 years' experience. In the opening chapter, 'Becoming a journalist', he outlines his journalistic career starting out on *Pensions News* and later working for the *Daily Telegraph's* 'Blogs' section. He honestly appraises the mistakes, the positive and negative experiences.

He is also the founder of the excellent media criticism newsletter, *Conquest of the Useless*, which he has run since 2020.

The book also contains insider insight from several leading journalists – some of whom prefer to remain anonymous, for obvious reasons.

The result is an excellent book.

Wright points out in the prologue to *Breaking* that he has nothing but the utmost respect for the many people within his industry who practise their craft with diligence and integrity.

The book is not about these people but 'those media figures who squander what little trust in journalism remains and the executives who exploit the high hopes of young reporters and put them to work pumping out lowest common denominator slop'.

His central thesis is that when journalists boast 'no one tells me what to write', they mask the invisible constraints shaping their work. He painstakingly exposes how editorial lines, ownership oligarchies, and economic realities govern what is reported and how.

He re-visits major news stories of recent decades with a fresh eye

– the Andrew Gilligan report on the dodgy dossier which led to the death of the scientist Dr David Kelly and the Hutton Inquiry; the way Christopher Jefferies, a retired teacher in Bristol, became the person portrayed after his arrest in the British press as a voyeur and pervert accused of the murder of his tenant Joanna Yeates – and draws lessons for today.

Some chapters, like 'What's the story?' stand out. After the case of sub-postmasters wrongly convicted of stealing from their branches because of a fundamentally flawed computer system was turned into an ITV drama *Mr Bates vs the Post Office* there was an explosion of front-page denunciations in national newspapers. Wright comments this 'might have given the impression that the national newspapers had been all over the scandal throughout the fifteen years since the story was first revealed in *Computer World* in 2008'.

In fact, as the writers and producers of the ITV drama acknowledged, they relied on the reporting in *Computer Weekly* and the work of Nick Wallis, a freelance journalist who pursued the scandal for years in *Private Eye*, three BBC Panorama programmes, a BBC Radio 4 series and a book.

As with other scandals, he

When journalists boast 'no one tells me what to write', they mask the invisible constraints shaping their work

points out, it is the trade journals which sound the alarm over dangerous cladding on high-rise buildings (*Inside Housing*) or crumbling concrete in schools (*Jessica Hill in Schools Week*).

Opinions and propaganda

Another very informative chapter is 'A Matter of Opinions: On Columns and Columnists'. Wright uses the ideas and comments of *The Guardian* columnist Nesrine Malik to contrast with what 'opinion writers' – she describes these as 'propagandist' – whose purpose is to create controversy and to become the protagonist. Wright analyses what he calls 'columnist derangement syndrome' (CDS) – a condition 'where the demand for new and controversial opinions every week on deadline leads someone further and further into unhinged territory'.

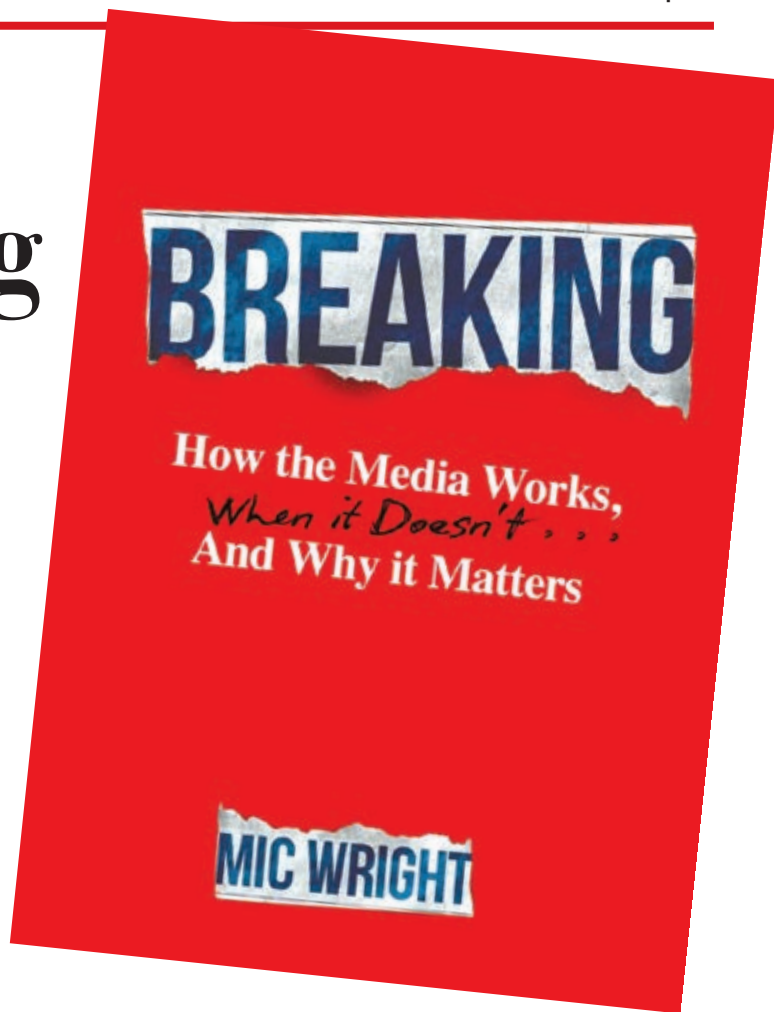
Wright also turns his attention to the issue of media ethics and responsibility. He dissects several high-profile media stories – including the death of Nicola Bulley and the 2021 Plymouth gun attack – to show how the worst journalistic behaviour is revealed when faced with the self-generated need to doorstep the victims

and loved ones of tragedies.

Wright tempers his entirely justified cynicism and anger about the present state of UK media with a sincere, if cautious, optimism for the future of journalism. "Journalism can have a bright future even if the companies that have dominated it for the last 50 years do not. There are more ways of reporting on the world today than ever before and more means of getting paid for those stories."

This review was written as Reach announced major job cuts which prompted the NUJ Reach Group Chapel to say, "...it is obvious from the overall total of 321 jobs in line for the chop that the concept of quality journalism itself is imperilled at the UK and Ireland's largest commercial publisher." They also pointed out that "...AI is behind its thinking that it can cut hundreds of journalists and still enjoy a reputation for quality journalism."

Wright believes that in the end most people won't accept untrustworthy AI slop or poisonous billionaire propaganda; they will always value good, important stories told by decent human beings. Let's hope he's right. **MN**



Orgreave Inquiry goes ahead

On 21 July Yvette Cooper, then Home Secretary, announced a statutory inquiry to investigate the events surrounding clashes at Orgreave in June 1984.

In total, 95 pickets were arrested and initially charged with riot and violent disorder, but all charges were later dropped after evidence was discredited.

The inquiry will be statutory, with the appropriate powers to compel people to provide information. The Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox, the Bishop of Sheffield, has agreed to chair the inquiry.

This is great news and a tribute to the work by the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, which was set up in Nov. 2012.

Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign Secretary, Kate Flannery, said, "We now need to be satisfied that the inquiry is given the necessary powers to fully investigate all the aspects of the orchestrated policing at Orgreave, and have unrestricted access to all relevant information including government, police and media documents, photos and films."

Evidence produced on the 40th anniversary of Orgreave for an inquiry

In April 2024 Northumbria Police destroyed any remaining papers associated with the miners' strike and Orgreave. Among the documents destroyed were papers covering the deployment of the Police Special Units in South Yorkshire, as well as documents relating to the subsequent handling of one of the most violent assaults by a police officer on a miner captured by national television crews.

MediaNorth has contacted the inquiry to give evidence on the central role and impact of the media in the strike and particularly in its reporting of Orgreave in June 1984.

MN

Obituary

Brian Lewis: Painter, poet, storyteller, historian, political activist, teacher

By Ian Clayton

My old friend and mentor Brian Lewis died on August 15.

I met Brian in the late 1970s, first on the evening at Pontefract Town Hall when we helped form a branch of the Anti-Nazi League, then at his house on Linden Terrace when I took some of my writing to show him.

He invited me in, sat in an arm chair next to his bay window and said, 'I'll read it now.' I can still see him reading by the light coming through his window. He licked his thumb to turn the pages, pulled his glasses to the end of his nose and said, 'Your verbs are active, that's the way to do it.'

I was encouraged. Brian was perhaps the greatest encourager, not just for me, but for at least a half of the creative arts community in the north, the midlands and beyond in the past half century.

Brian Ernest Lewis was born in 1936 in Smethwick. He grew up in a flat above a wool shop on Waterloo Road. His dad was a poster writer and his mother a shop assistant. At school he played centre half in the football team and joined the drama society where he developed a love for Shakespeare.

He worked at Mitchell and



Brian Lewis

Butlers Brewery, did his National Service and as a young man moved north to settle in Pontefract. He married Jean, a doctor; they had three children.

In 1974 he met Reini at a SWP meeting. They later became active members of the local Labour party. Reini was his second wife and they too had three children.

Brian was one of the first people to obtain a degree from the Open University. He then worked as a college lecturer until in 1980 he became a full-time arts activist and founded the Yorkshire Art Circus under the banner 'Everyone has a story to tell'.

The Art Circus grew into a major community publishing charity and provided a start for many freelance writers, painters, actors, photographers and publish-

ers. Further down the road Brian was in demand as a consultant in economic development. In his seventies he visited India to teach Shakespeare to post graduate students.

He also became first Poet laureate of Birmingham. At home Brian was a collector of art as well as a maker. He believed you encourage young artists by buying their work and he amassed an important collection. Just in case it got too arty he wasn't averse to picking up the odd plastic Bart Simpson or Royal wedding mug from car boot sales for 'balance'.

He liked to cook and foist onto visitors his infamous vegetable stew, a deep pink coloured concoction with boiled beetroot and radish in it.

Brian will be remembered for his ability to make friends from all sorts of backgrounds, his love of the anecdote and words, his strategic thinking and left-field curiosity. He quoted Shakespeare and George Formby with equal relish. When he was asked how he'd like to be remembered, he said, 'As a teacher.'

Of course, he wasn't the sort of teacher who would stand in front of a board and fill you with facts and figures, Brian was a teacher who encouraged life and living it.

MN

The Art of Class War on sale at festival

For the first time at the South Yorkshire Festival on Sunday 10 August we ran a stall selling Nick Jones' book *The Art of Class War*. Jon and Jane Ingham also sold copies of Alan Hardman's *Need Not Greed*.

The meeting in the afternoon had Jane speaking about Alan's book and Nick focusing on cartoonists from the left press and how they covered the miners' strike.

Nick will be speaking at the

Cartoon Museum at 63 Wells Street. You can book for this session here:

Event: 13 November – Cartoons of Class War: Newspaper cartoonists and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike.

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