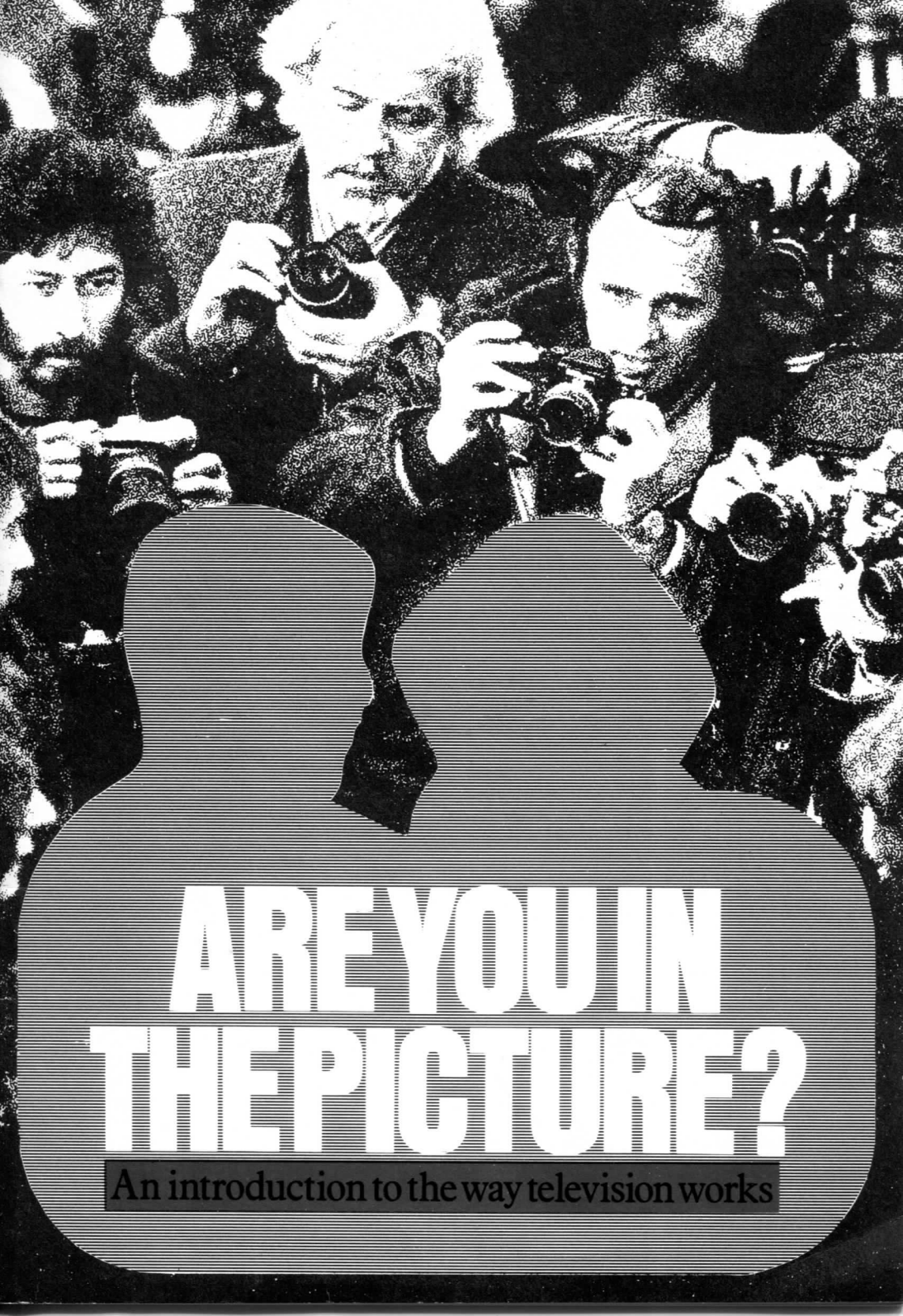

ARE YOU IN
THE PICTURE?
An introduction to the way television works

It is the essence of the idea of a consensus that it attempts, at a conscious and unconscious level, to impose the view that there is only one 'right' reading. Dissenting readings should be rejected by the audience. The assumption derives from the view that we – that is the audience and the broadcaster – are united in one nation in spite of class or political divisions. The broadcasters present their images to the public with all the authority of the great public organisations for which they work. The 'public' is expected to accept the proposed reading without question. But images are themselves nearly all open to a variety of interpretations.'

STUART HOOD, 'Television'

Out of focus: people and ideas the broadcasters miss

IN BRITAIN, most people, whatever their political views, can identify the political bias of the national press: *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Express*, *Mail* and *Sun* support the Tories: the *Guardian* seems to favour Labour or the SDP/Liberal Alliance: the *Star* and the *Mirror* lean from the centre towards Labour's right wing and the *Morning Star* supports the Communist Party.

But when it comes to radio and television the situation is less clear. Indeed broadcasting organisations claim to be *neutral* – to provide balance between conflicting views in society.

For example, the BBC Charter 'requires the BBC to refrain from expressing a point of view on any matter of public controversy or public policy . . . for the BBC to take sides in any controversial issue would in any case be contrary to its own long-established policy of impartiality . . . the essence of impartiality is balance . . .' (BBC Handbook)

Similarly, the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (1973) orders that: 'It shall be the duty of the authority to satisfy itself that . . . due impartiality is preserved on the part of the persons providing the programmes as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy'.

In the last decade – despite these claims to 'impartiality' and 'balance' – radio and television have attracted criticism from a wide range of social and political groups. They range from trade unions and women's movement groups to enthic minority groups, claimants and anti-nuclear groups.

These groups claim that far from presenting a 'balanced' description of the world, radio and television show distorted images of reality. These criticisms have been substantiated by the TUC and broadcasting unions, by organisations such as Women in Media and the Women's Film and Broadcasting Lobby, by the Campaign against Racism in the Media, the anti-nuclear monitoring group Media Watch and by academic bodies such as the Glasgow Media Group, Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Leicester University's Centre for Mass Communications, the Polytechnic of Central London's School of Communications and the British Film Institute.

Understandably, most recent criticism has been directed at news and current affairs programmes. The coverage of industrial, political and economic affairs is seen as central to the political process. But the

problem is more extensive than the 'bias in the news' debate recognises. All broadcasting (drama, comedy, light entertainment and children's programmes) is a representation of the world we live in. News and current affairs cannot be separated from the context in which they operate. Other programmes confirm and endorse the view of society given by news and current affairs and they legitimise each other. For example, stereotypes of working people, women and black people recur in different forms throughout television programming.

This pamphlet starts by looking briefly at the ways in which broadcasting represents working people, women, black people and issues like the nuclear arms race and Northern Ireland. These are just five examples of the power of broadcasting to give us 'pictures of the world'; images which, to some extent, influence the way we think and behave.

Working people

FEW people seriously expect the media to focus on the reality of industrial relations, on the vast majority of disputes which are resolved without confrontation. Instead coverage focuses on conflict, often violent, in which trade unionists appear determined on 'militant' action. A detailed study of television news in 1975 by the Glasgow Media Group shows the ways in which existing coverage selects or rejects information according to arbitrary assumptions of what is 'important' and what is 'newsworthy'.

The study revealed that in the first six months of 1975 half of all industrial stories in a bulletin they analysed focused on just three industries – transport and communications, public administration and motor manufacturing. Indeed, a quarter of all industrial stories were concerned with the 2.1 per cent of the population who work in vehicle production. Meanwhile, nine of the principal industrial disputes listed by the Department of Employment in that period were ignored altogether. Further the engineering industry, which had a high incidence of strikes, received negligible coverage.

The Glasgow Media Group also found that, 'in January 1975 a widely reported speech by the Prime Minister which referred to "manifestly avoidable stoppages of production" caused by management *and* labour was transformed in 29 later references and made to apply to the workforce alone.'

In another example the Group showed that news coverage of a 13-week strike by Glasgow dustcart drivers focused not on the cause of the dispute but on the effects of the dispute – the piling up of uncollected rubbish. The dispute was dealt with in 102 bulletins and

20 interviews. At no time was a striking driver interviewed on national television to explain the reasons for the drivers' actions.

On broader economic issues the Glasgow Media Group found that – during this period – there were 287 occasions when views supporting the government's policy of wage restraint were broadcast. Opposing views were aired 17 times.

Throughout coverage of industrial disputes and of economic affairs in general broadcasting adopts the viewpoint that continuous, efficient production is a 'good thing'. By definition any dispute, however justifiable, is a 'bad thing'. From this standpoint trade unionists are easily labelled as 'villains' while employers will generally be labelled as 'heroes' or will disappear from view altogether. 'News' will be the one worker who defies a strike call, rather than the many who support it. And from this viewpoint, solidarity between workers which prolongs a dispute is shown as a negative force to be opposed and weakened.

Style is also an important factor in creating positive and negative images. During an industrial dispute it is usual to see management being interviewed in the relative comfort and peace of an office. The atmosphere created by the film will be of order and sound judgement. Contrast that with the interview with strikers. Likely as not it will take place on the streets. The noise of traffic and people jostling around the camera creates a different atmosphere – one of chaos and disorder.

Not surprisingly, the cumulative effect of this coverage has been to weaken public support for trade unions. (Except, of course, where they offer opposition to a rival ideology – as they do in Poland.) In recent years the major confrontations of Grunwick – on the issue of union recognition – the Winter of Discontent and the TUC Day of Action – in opposition to the government's economic policies – have all been used in public debate to justify and support more legal controls on 'the power of the unions'.

Women

DESPITE the growth of the women's movement, the passing of Equal Pay laws and the Sex Discrimination Act women are under-represented both on and behind the screen. Further the images of women presented in television comedies, quiz games, feature films and so on have changed little during the last decade.

A brief study in 1977 for Thames TV's Superman and the Bride showed that although women make up more than half the population, television shows us *four* men for every woman, *14* male experts for every one female expert and *19* male presenters or commentators for

every one female presenter or commentator. Nor is it just a screen problem. A study of one local radio station, Radio Nottingham, in 1980 found that men's voices occupied 87.5 per cent of the regular morning news programme.

Behind the scenes the picture is even worse. A 1979 BBC survey showed that although a third of all the BBC staff were female only 15 per cent of management or professional jobs were held by women. Further in the top salary bracket there were 76 men for every one woman. A 1975 study by the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians showed that two thirds of women were confined to just three jobs – secretary, continuity girl and production assistant. And a 1981 survey by Thames TV showed that although all production assistants and most researchers were women, only 16 out of 111 producers and directors were women. Further not one of the 54 upper management jobs was held by a woman.

Greater pressure for participation in programming has placed more women in production jobs and produced some output from a feminist viewpoint. However, these are largely token gestures aimed at defusing the growing pressure for more equal participation in the media by women rather than signs of a new found concern for women's rights.

Black people

BLACK people, like women, are notable by their absence from broadcasting. A 1974 study by the actors' union Equity showed that out of 891 artistes appearing on television in one week, just 45 were black and 12 of these were members of the Harlem Globetrotters team.

During the last decade radio and television have expanded minority coverage for ethnic communities but the racist assumptions of much mainstream broadcasting remain largely unchanged. The news still features black people predominantly as muggers, rioters and terrorists. The racist equation that 'black equals immigrant' remains untouched in broadcasting despite the presence of generations of British-born black people and despite the fact that two-thirds of immigrants are white (1971 census). Feature films and situation comedies still feature black people in a narrow range of roles: they are either objects of fear or objects of laughter; savages and gangsters or clowns and entertainers.

The home industry's failure to present a realistic picture of the black community's role in British life was further criticised by the Commission for Racial Equality in a report in 1982 and added fresh fuel to the campaign for ending the sort of stereotyped images produced by comedy programmes such as Mind Your Language.

Meanwhile broadcasting reworks and re-presents British colonial history through nostalgic white eyes that bring us The Onedin Line and The Explorers. Series like Roots and Benson which challenge some of these assumptions are almost exclusively American imports.

Northern Ireland

COVERAGE of Northern Ireland during the past 14 years stands out as by far the most blatant example of state interference in broadcasting. The Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland has listed the following programmes that have been banned, censored or delayed because of the sensitivity of the broadcasting establishment.

1970 BBC Panorama
1971 BBC 24 Hours (Feb)
BBC 24 Hours (Sept)
ITV World in Action
BBC 24 Hours (Nov)
1972 BBC The Question Of Ulster
ITV This Week: Aftermath of Bloody Sunday
BBC A Sense of Loss
1973 ATV Hang Out Your Brightest Colours
1975 ITV This Week: Hand Across the Sea
1976 BBC Article Five
BBC The Scottish Connection
1977 BBC Tonight: Interview
BBC Man Alive: A Street in Belfast
ITV This Week: In Friendship and Forgiveness
ITV This Week: Life Behind the Wire
ITV This Week: Inhuman and Degrading Treatment
1978 BBC Carrickmore
1980 ITV Creggan
ITV World in Action: The Propaganda War
1982 BBC Open Door – Campaign for Free Speech On Ireland

The most ironic of these examples of censorship must be the banning of Open Door – a programme which criticised media coverage of Northern Ireland. A BBC representative defended the ban by saying:

'We are concerned to protect the freedom of programme makers and journalists to work in this area and to surrender editorial control of any programme might imperil that freedom.'

Despite illuminating accounts of Irish history from both the BBC's Ireland and ITV's The Troubles most current affairs coverage of the present conflicts operates on the assumption that it is quite 'natural' to do it this way.

As a TV News reporter quoted in 'Putting Reality Together by Philip Schlesinger put it in 1978:

'You operate within the going establishment view. You don't have to be on the government of the day's side, but firmly on the side of the law of the land. The Army's more OK than the IRA.'

The Bomb

THE threat of nuclear warfare is turning out to be one of the most pressing issues of the 1980s. Yet despite widespread public interest, after 15 years of censorship the BBC still refuses to show The War Game, the Peter Watkins documentary on the effects of a nuclear attack. In March 1981 the Director General Sir Ian Trethowan explained: 'However many warnings broadcast in advance there would not just be the likelihood but the certainty that some elderly people living alone would find themselves watching it without warning; so might some people of limited intelligence; and sadly maybe even some children. I don't believe that any broadcasting authority could take responsibility for what the effect might be on those people'.

Meanwhile, though the BBC banned anti-nuclear campaigner E.P. Thompson from delivering the Dimbleby lecture in 1982 it handed



'And to ensure a balanced and impartial discussion of the latest government measures I have with me a government spokesman and a wild-eyed Trot from the lunatic fringe'.

the prestigious series of Reith lectures to a pro-nuclear NATO adviser. Following a widespread protest they relaxed this ban to allow Nicholas Humphrey to deliver an anti-nuclear Bronowski lecture. But this was prefaced by a public disclaimer and warning from BBC Chairman George Howard.

At the same time public protests like the 500,000 strong petition against Cruise and Trident missiles completed in February 1980 have gone comparatively unreported. Pro-nuclear Ministry of Defence propaganda has no such problem about access to the airwaves.

In response to the growing pressure of public opinion, broadcasting has begun to treat anti-nuclear arguments as a threat rather than as an irrelevance, and has begun to challenge and oppose them rather than ingore them.

Conclusion

IN 1926 during the General Strike, the BBC's Managing Director, later Lord Reith, argued that: 'Assuming the BBC is for the people and the Government is for the people, it follows that the BBC must be for the Government in this crisis too'.

If broadcasting were harnessed as clearly and directly to the State as this quote suggests it would be easier to recognise and combat its effects. But the problem is that broadcasting is more complex and ambiguous than the brief examples in this pamphlet show: thus, the problem is harder to deal with. Although individual programmes may sometimes offer alternative views, broadcasting companies reproduce a view of the world in which women, black people and working people participate only marginally. This view of the world generally lures the majority of viewers and listeners towards accepting an establishment view about the way society should be organised.

Balance, bias and the British way of broadcasting

AT PRESENT broadcasting organisations fail even by their own standards of impartiality and balance. They are bound to fail for there is a problem with the very notion of impartiality and balance – someone has to *define* what is to be balanced and determine *where* the central balancing point is to be placed. More important is the assumption that there is one balanced point from which society can be surveyed in a neutral fashion. This assumption is commonly shared both by those

who support the present situation and those who argue that the point of balance is wrongly placed and so produces a bias against certain groups in society.

For many people the solution to 'media bias' is simple. Since the media are seen as presenting a distorted picture of the real world, then all that is required is a change of control to substitute a 'real' picture of the 'real' world. This, however, avoids the central issue. However fair and even handed the programming, the problem remains that all media will inevitably be biased, whoever controls and operates them, because the media represent the world through a process of selection, rejection and creation. In this process, programme makers are inevitably shaped and confined by their own backgrounds and beliefs, by the organisations that they work for and by the professional practices they learn from fellow broadcasters, by legal and social requirements and by the complex pattern of values and assumptions that prevail in our society.

The problem for broadcasting then is not 'how to represent the real world in a real way', but rather 'how to represent and recognise the different, often conflicting, views of the "real world" which exist within society and the mass media themselves'. Equally important, 'how can different views and interpretations be brought into the open rather than masked by a mythical cloak of impartiality.'

The current inadequacies of broadcasting cannot in fact be resolved simply by seeking changes at the level of programmes and programme makers. Any changes in the structure of broadcasting must recognise that no single individual or organisation can fairly represent society, and instead must build on the recognition of the different interests and biases in society and in the media themselves.

British broadcasting _ how it works

THERE are two sides to the British broadcasting system. There is the BBC, a monolithic and centralised organisation paid for out of licence fees, or there is independent television and radio, a group of profit-making radio and television companies relying on advertising for revenue. Both BBC channels are national networks with weak regional bases. ITV is split into regional franchise operations. Channel 4 is a national publisher – its programmes come from existing ITV companies or 'independent producers'. Commercial radio is split into local companies with a franchise to broadcast, although much of their 'news' comes from a national news network.

This sort of organisation – state funding against commercial enter-

prise – limits the development of a genuine pluralist media. It is also represents a narrow range of views and opinions.

BBC

A BOARD of Governors appointed by the Home Office controls the BBC. It would be difficult to describe the board members as a typical cross-section of society.

Chairman: Sir George Howard, 62, educated Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. Residence: Castle Howard, Yorkshire (Location of Brideshead Revisited). Grandson of the Ninth Earl of Carlisle.

Vice-Chairman: Sir William Rees-Mogg, 54, Educated Charterhouse and Balliol College, editor of the Times 1967-81, Conservative candidate Chester-Le-Street, twice.

National Governor for Scotland: Dr Roger Young, 58, Educated Westminster and Christchurch College, Oxford. Public school headmaster.

National Governor for Wales: Mr Alwyn Roberts, 49, Ordained Presbyterian Minister.

National Governor for Northern Ireland: Lady Faulkner of Downpatrick, 57, previously personal secretary to N.I. Prime Minister Sir Basil Brooke and widow of Brian Faulkner, killed in hunting accident 1977.

Lord Allen of Fallowfield, 68, ex-General Secretary of shopworkers' union, USDAW.

Lady Serota of Hampstead, 62, former Labour whip and junior Health Minister.

Sir John Johnston, 64, last High Commissioner in Rhodesia 1964-1965, High Commissioner for Canada 1974-78.

Professor Christopher Longuet-Higgins, 59, Winchester and Balliol College, Royal Society Research Professor at Sussex University.

Miss Jocelyn Barrow, born Trinidad. Came to to Britain 1960; only black member of board. General Secretary of Campaign against Racial Discrimination 1964-69.

Mr Peter Moores, 50, Director Littlewoods. Educated at Eton and Christchurch.

Mr Stuart Young, 48, chartered accountant, many directorships and member of Jewish and Anglo-Israeli bodies. Member of the Carlton Club.

The BBC Governors delegate responsibility for programme output to their board of management, an equally upper-class, male dominated body.

The lower levels of the BBC mirror the social class of the governing bodies – primarily public school or graduate men with a token sprinkling of women and minority representation. Recruitment for management, professional and editorial grades is subject to security vetting by MI5. The News Trainee and Research Assistants training scheme are open only to graduates. Although about half the successful candidates are women, most successful applicants come from Oxford or Cambridge universities.

Commercial broadcasting

THE Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) is the watchdog of all commercial broadcasting. The members of the Authority of IBA are appointed by the Home Office. As with the BBC few of its members come from the shop floor.

Chairman: Lord Thompson of Monifieth, 61, educated Grove Academy, Dundee, Chancellor of Herriot Watt University since 1977, former Labour Minister of State, Foriegn Office and EEC Commissioner, Club –Brooks.

Deputy Chairman: Sir John Riddell, 48, educated Eton and Christ Church, 13th Baronet. Conservative candidate, Durham, 1974.

Mr. A.M.G. Christopher, 57, educated Cheltenham Grammar School and Westminster College of Commerce. Member of the TUC General Council 1976 -, General Secretary of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation.

Sir Dennis Hamilton, DSO, TD, 64, educated Middlesborough High School, Chairman of Times Newspapers Holdings Ltd since 1980.

Mrs J.D.M. Jowitt, JP, 42, educated Hatherop Castle, Switzerland and Spain, Associate Shopping editor, House and Gardens and Vogue, 1966-69, recreations include fox hunting.

Mrs. J. McIvor, 52, educated Methodist College, Lurgan College, University College of Belfast, called to the Bar of Ireland 1980.

The Rev'd Dr. W.J. Morriss, JP, 57, educated Cardiff High School, University of Wales, Edinburgh University, Minister of Glasgow Cathedral since 1967, Chaplain to the Queen in Scotland since 1969.

Like the IBA, the boards of the individual radio and television stations are predominantly white, middle or upper-class males largely from public or grammar schools. In addition each tends to reflect the powerful financial and political interests in the region in which it operates its franchise.

Winning a television or radio franchise means that the company has

the right to broadcast programmes and pocket the profits from advertising revenue in a given area. Franchise contracts are renewed every eight years when the IBA is supposed to examine alternative bids to the sitting tenant. In the cases of the big five television companies (Thames, Granada, London Weekend, Yorkshire and Central) it is extremely difficult to replace them outright with a new contractor because of the size of their operations.

Channel 4

CHANNEL 4 is attempting to respond to some of the criticisms levelled at present television output by catering for tastes and interests that are excluded from both ITV and BBC. Women, young people, religious and ethnic minorities were all promised a larger share of air time. Managing Director Jeremy Isaacs, has said that, 'Channel 4 is determined to bring new voices to television with programmes about Britain's ethnic minorities.' (The Guardian, 30.9.82) Further Isaacs has stated that, 'we want to use a lot of news about industry, and not just about strikes.' (Bristol Evening Post 7.7.82)

In the first months the new Channel certainly made a good start. Programmes like Union World with Gus MacDonald offered a serious and thoughtful look at trades unionism in Britain while a weekly all-women news review provided an enterprising alternative to the images of events seen through the eyes of ITN news readers. However, although the initial statements and programmes were promising, the response coming from the boardrooms of ITV companies has been generally negative.

The views of ITV executives matter because Channel 4 is financed by a levy on the 15 commercial programme companies. Not only is Channel 4 a financial burden to the commercial companies but it is also a competitor for advertising. As Channel 4 must ultimately pay its way – and its initial viewing figures were poor – and as the IBA's hope that many Channel 4 programmes would come from the commercial



CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION

companies seems to have come to nothing, it seems inevitable that Channel 4 will have financial problems in the future. It's also becoming clear that the commercial companies will be far from sympathetic.

The result could mean minority groups will be given low budget programmes that could only appeal to a very few people. This would reinforce the widespread belief that these subjects can only be presented in a boring way, and can never appeal to larger audiences.

On a Different wavelength – Broadcasting in other countries

SINCE no broadcasting system can avoid bias, the solution to bias in a democratic society must be to promote greater pluralism, free from direct government or commercial pressures. Other European nations have tried to resolve these problems in different ways.

Holland:

The Dutch have a system which allows for openly biased broadcasting by different groups within a non-commercial public service system. This system is co-ordinated by a government sponsored organisation (NOS), which owns the technical facilities, employs technical staff, coordinates the output of various rival groups and provides a core of programming. It includes a news service. It makes 10 per cent of the time available to small minority groups and the remainder is allocated according to the size of the membership to six non-profitmaking associations based on the main religious and political divisions within Holland.

The finance comes from a mixture of licence revenue and advertising and is distributed by the Government to NOS and the six organisations proportionate to the amount of programme time they provide.

West Germany:

In West Germany, each region has its own broadcasting organisation, without federal control. They each have slightly different systems for controlling the organisation and choosing their senior personnel. There is a federation of broadcasting companies, which is responsible for the networking of programmes.

In North Rhine Westphalia, for instance, there is a broadcasting council which is elected by the land Parliament, which in turn chooses the administrative committee of the radio and television station. It also chooses the controller of the station who is in executive command of the programme makers. The broadcasting council is composed of political figures in similar proportions to the political composition of the land Parliament.

This system offers the advantage that political control is explicit. In Germany everybody knows who is talking, why and what they are saying. When one station identification sign comes up the viewer knows that the world view to be presented will be slightly different from other stations.

Italy:

Regulations on broadcasting in Italy have been relaxed so that a wide variety of organisations operate including porn merchants, fascists, socialists, feminists and trade unions. The result is chaos. The Italian system shows the failure of free market forces to provide good public service broadcasting, although it has produced some interesting experiments. Because of the political balance of power between Christian Democrats and the Communists in Italy RAI – the State broadcasting system – has divided its two main channels so that Channel One is broadly inclined to the Christian Democrat viewpoint while Channel Two broadly adopts a more socialist stance. This division is apparent throughout the programming from news output to entertainment and drama.

Get in the picture – how to complain

FOR those who are dissatisfied with broadcasting, there is an easy answer – complain. Every time people see or hear something offensive, they can ring up the station concerned, and follow it up with a letter to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (70, Brompton Road, London SW3) or to the Board of Governors of the BBC (Broadcasting House, London W1) with a copy to the Director of Programmes of your local station.

Usually only written complaints are taken seriously. But sometimes a barrage of telephone complaints will have an effect. For example, during the TUC's Day of Action on May 14, 1980, telephone complaints managed to change Scottish news coverage from 'four of the 19 Scottish mines worked on' to '*only* 4 out of the 19 Scottish mines were operational'. And in October 1979 after the TUC organised its first march in support of abortion, telephone complaints challenged news reports which focused on an argument about who led the march. Later reports recognized the size and significance of the 80,000-strong demonstration.

Broadcasting Complaints Commission: (BCC), established under the Broadcasting Act of 1980 the Commission is a sign that managements have recognised the need for a body to deal with complaints.

The Commission has the power to consider and adjudicate upon complaints of:

'a) unjust or unfair treatment in sound or television programmes actually broadcast . . .; or

b) unwarranted infringement of privacy in, or in connection with the obtaining of material included in, sound or television programmes actually broadcast'.

Moreover, the BCC has sweeping powers: it can hear complaints relating to dead people (up to five years after their demise) which even our libel laws do not allow. Also it can hear complaints from diplomats on behalf of their foreign governments. The BCC can enforce the co-operation of production workers on the programme against which a complaint has been made, making them produce any correspondence relating tto the programme – including internal memoranda between members of staff.

However, BCC hearings are held in private and the Members of the Commission are unlikely to worry the media establishment. It is chaired by **Lady Pike**, a junior minister in the Macmillan government and retired chairperson of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. She is aided by **Sir Thomas Skryme**, chairperson of the Magistrates Association; **Mr Peter Hardiman Scott**, former political editor of the BBC; Professor **Sir Thomas Carberry**, former chairman of the Scottish IBA.

The result is that this complaints body satisfies no-one. It fails on the one hand to deal adequately with complaints and offers no proper redress; and on the other hand it threatens the freedom of broadcasters to broadcast. Although there clearly is a need for a complaints mechanism the BCC does not meet that need.

If the telephone calls, the letters, and the complaints to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission don't work, people have few alternatives. One option – and it is one which should be considered at the outset – might be to contact the trade union organisations within the broadcasting station. Usually there will be a National Union of Journalists Chapel, representing the reporters and editors, or an ACTT shop, representing technicians, or an Association of Broadcasting Staff section, for BBC staff.

These unions all have close contact and in recent years have come together to form a useful alliance on many industrial matters. They also have sympathetic policies at national level to deal with abuse of media responsibility and very often local officials will be prepared to take up complaints.

Making contact: Whether the aim is to complain or to try to influence

coverage people should try to make adequate preparations to help them handle the media effectively and with confidence. Denis MacShane's book, Using the Media (Pluto Press) or How to Handle the Media (TUC) are useful guides about who to talk to, how to present a case, how to provide information, what conditions to lay down and so on. Second, it may be useful to approach 'alternative' community based media who may be more sympathetic than the BBC or commercial broadcasting.

Epilogue

THE debate about broadcasting has barely begun in this country and it would be wrong to pretend that solutions are easy or obvious. This pamphlet has set out some of the problems.

Previous proposals for changing broadcasting in Britain by the Pilkington Commission and the Annan Commission have largely been ignored. The Conservative Party and the SDP/Liberal Alliance have no policies in this area.

The Labour Party is at least discussing solutions upon the following lines. Labour argues that for reform of existing broadcasting organisations to be effective it must deal with four basic aspects: **aims, control, access** and **finance**.

ONE: New legislation could define the **aims** of broadcasting as plurality rather than impartiality, to represent the wide range of viewpoints that are currently excluded, rather than aim for mythical neutrality.

TWO: There could be changes in **control** of the broadcasting organisations to make them more democratically accountable, both nationally and regionally, and to alter their monolithic and centralised structures to allow greater regional variety.

THREE: Public **access** to broadcasting could be extended through positive discrimination in employment and training for ethnic minority groups and women and through making finance and technical facilities and staff available to numerous non-professional groups who wished to communicate their views to a wider public.

FOUR: **Finance** from advertising and licence revenue could be combined to fund a wider range of non-commercial community based broadcasting organisations alongside commercial and public service broadcasting.

Despite these ideas it is pointless to imagine that any radical change in the way broadcasting is organised in Britain could ever be implemented without real political changes elsewhere in society. And it is

important to recognise that changes in broadcasting structure must be linked with changes in the existing laws of libel, contempt, and official secrets, for all of these have been used to silence reasonable criticism in the past. Moreover, proposals for change must also recognise the new technologies – satellites, cable and video systems – which will continue to reshape British broadcasting through 'free market forces' unless we decide otherwise.

Suggested further reading

Glasgow Media Group
Bad News RKP
More Bad News RKP
Really Bad News Writers & Readers

Trade Unions and the Media
P. Beharrell & G. Philo (Editors)
London, Macmillan

Using the Media
Denis Macshane, Pluto Press.
Nukespeak: The Media & The Bomb
London, Comedia
The British Media & Ireland
Information on Ireland

Why Their News is Bad News
30min video film by The Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom. For hire & sale details telephone 01 437 2795

For further information contact: The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG. Individuals can become members for £5 pa. Organisations can affiliate for an annual fee depending on size of membership: below 1,000, £10; 1,000 to 10,000, £15; 10,000 to 50,000, £25; 50,000 to 100,000, £50; 100,000 & over, £100.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom aims to

★ Challenge the myths of 'impartiality' and 'balance' in broadcasting and 'objectivity' in newspapers by campaigning for the genuine presentation of the diversity and p'urality of society.
★ Challenge the myth that only private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access.
★ Challenge the myth that the present forms of ownership and regulation of broadcasting guarantee editorial independence, democratic accountability or high programme standards.
★ Carry out research and generate debate on alternative forms of ownership and control of newspapers and broadcasting in order to guarantee freedom from either state control or domination by business conglomerates and encourage the creation of alternative media including those sympathetic to the labour movement.
★ Encourage the development of industrial democracy in the newspaper and broadcasting industries.
★ Encourage debate on the implications of technological advances in the media to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded and that commercial interests do not override public accountability.
★ Campaign on the general principles in the Minority Report of the 1977 Royal Commission on the Press, including proposals for a National Printing Corporation to provide a competitive public sector in the industry and a launch fund to assist new publications.
★ Campaign for a reformed and reconstituted Press Council to promote basic standards of fairness and access to the press on behalf of the public. The right of reply is fundamental to redressing the imbalance in press bias.
★ Campaign for a reduction in legal restrictions on freedom of publication and increased access to information through a Freedom of Information Bill and reform of the Official Secrets Act and similar restrictive legislation.
★ Campaign for the legal right of access for publications to the distribution system, and a guaranteed right of display.

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

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