



# UNDERGROUND OVERGROUND

*"The underground media is produced by activists - bored of not being given a platform, we create our own; bored of being misquoted, we quote each other; bored of going on actions, then rushing home to find the news either disregarding us, or distorting our deeds and words."*

Jamie, Small World Media

Did you know that just five companies own at least 85% of UK newspaper sales? (*News International, Mirror Group, Daily Mail plc, United Papers plc, & The Telegraph plc*). With that ownership comes censorship, in the form of owners with their own political agenda. Many people wondered why it was only after Robert Maxwell's death that he was revealed to be such a crook. The answer is simple: censorship, thanks to deep pockets and the libel laws.

Censorship comes when editors pander to the whims of advertisers, scared that they would pull their cash if the papers started to offend the money bags. Even after the murder of Nigerian eco-activist Ken Saro Wiwa last year, the Guardian still ran adverts for Shell on their pages.

SchNEWS was shocked when it opened last week's Observer and a supplement about Indonesia's business opportunities fell onto the floor. Had they not heard of the human rights atrocities in East Timor? When we rang to quiz them, the Observer told SchNEWS that "this information was confidential". P'haps the next supplement will outline business opportunities in Burma?

Censorship even comes from within, from scribes either being too lazy or too busy to research a story properly, or just simply imposing their own form of self-censorship.

*"Journalists censor themselves daily, toning down or rejecting passages - sometimes whole articles. Crime reporters don't trum-*

*pet police sloth or incompetence, as the job needs inside sources."*

John Sweeney, The Observer.

Freelance journo Danny Penman told SchNEWS: "A mainstream journalist too often spends time commenting to a tightly focused group, feeding people's prejudices to hold their interest rather than opening their minds to new ideas. That can only ever have a corrosive effect on democracy, freedom of thought and expression."

Last year, a socio-professional profile of British journalists was carried out - revealing it to be an almost exclusively white middle class occupation. Half went to university, 95% are in favour of competition, 88% favour free enterprise...

## SO IS UNDERGROUND MEDIA THE ANSWER?

*"While media activists and the general public can use consumer equipment for their productions, they are severely hampered by the corporate stranglehold over the means of exhibition and distribution"*

*"Our culture is dominated by the influence of the corporate mentality as never before...A popular movement for social change must take advantage of the new technologies to further democratise the nation and to empower the disenfranchised. It is not the technology that will revolutionise society, but a movement of millions that must transform society."*

### Contacts

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom 0171 278 4430 \*\*Bypass: listings of underground press. £2 to ByPass, P.O. Box 148, Hove, BN3 3DQ \*\*Undercurrents - 'the alternative news service' on video. Issue 6 now available for £12.95/£9.95 concs from 16B Cherwill St., Oxford, OX4 1BG 01865 203 662 \*\*INK (the trade association for small press) 0181 671 7920

## DIGITAL TV

*"Rupert wants to rule the world and he seems to be doing it"*

Digital TV is the latest advance of the information superhighway. A box by the TV will give you 150 channels beamed to you by satellite. However, before even a single box appears in our homes, the playing field isn't level. Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB has announced that it will launch a digital service next year - long before other channels get their act together. The BBC and Granada have already signed up to be amongst the 150 services offered on the new satellite. This means he is likely to achieve a 25% share of the digital market, to nestle alongside his 30% ownership of the UK newspaper market.

Such media control comes from a man who threw the BBC off his Star satellite in Asia because its news coverage was offending the Chinese government, and forced Viacom, one of America's largest entertainment corporations, to sell an interest in one of its companies to Murdoch in order to get their programmes onto BSkyB.

Anyone who stands in the way of Murdoch, may find any of his newspapers in 4 continents swiftly deployed against them. Right now Murdoch's tabloid *New York Daily Post* is being used to attack Ted Turner of CNN who have persuaded Time Warner to dump Murdoch's Fox News Channel.

## THE EVENING ARGUS...

...disgusted with falling ratings (from 100,000 in 1985 to a mere 66,000 in 1996) sacked editor Chris Fowler this week. When in charge, he instructed the Argus-owned monthly music magazine *Hyper* to censor any news on SchNEWS or Justice? Sorry to see you go, Chris, after our long and fruitful working relationship. P'haps you'd like to join our Media Training Day (see below), and see how it's really done!

## SchNEWS TRAINING DAY

*Come and find out how we do it. Training in database, news research, DTP and stuffin' envelopes! January 6th. Ring the office for details.*

## Diary of a Direct Action Conference Organiser

Wednesday night 2 a.m. The phone rings...they're in. 4 people have managed to get through a broken window and re-enter the old Courthouse building. It had lain empty for years before Justice? squatted it in 1994 to protest against the CJB. During our occupation we fixed the roof, plumbing, electricity, toilets and set up a community centre.

51 days later it was all over. *Alford Developments* got an eviction notice, promising in court to use the place as a homeless hostel over Christmas (they didn't). The bailiffs came in and trashed the place... 2 years on and it's still empty. Brighton Council have threatened the owners that if immediate repairs aren't made to the Grade II listed building, the council will start work and send the owners the bill.

Thursday morning 8.30 a.m. - the police show up, and despite a huge section 6 banner hanging from the roof, letting the authorities know it's been legally squatted, they're ready to move in. Chief Inspector Martin Bailey tells the occupiers he doesn't care about the law; the squatters have committed criminal damage by allegedly breaking a window getting into the property. But what about the criminal damage the owners are causing, letting water pour through the roof?

Panic stations as we activate the phone tree - there's fifteen police, with dogs, and a battering ram smashing their way in - the irony that they are doing this in order to arrest people for criminal damage isn't lost on us! A solicitor is telling one of the occupiers on the mobile that the police can't evict, they need a court order - "*But they are evicting us now!*" she yells back down the phone!

Three brave souls hang from a window ledge in the cold for nearly 7 hours, by which time we can get a crowd of people, a band playing, a mobile café, lots of media coverage, a solicitor and local green party councillor - Pete West - who tells the press: "*It's a pity police don't take as much action when there's a burglary.*" Lydia Dagostino from Bindmans Solicitors tries to reason with senior officers but gets nowhere: "*The overall response was totally disproportionate to the alleged offence. It seems that senior police officers are willing to go to any lengths to stop this sort of thing happening in Brighton even if they are acting illegally.*"

12 noon Friday and about 50 of us assemble in a pub and walk *en masse* to another squat cracked in the early hours of the morning. Strength in numbers we hope. We're followed by two undercover police, and within minutes a police helicopter is flying overhead. We're in - but the place is too small, so a few of us go searching for another venue. By now the town is crawling with cops - why? We only want to hold a Conference!

Months of planning... but it's 7 a.m. Saturday before another venue is found: a 14 storey office block that's been derelict for a decade. Its grim inside, and only 2 floors are useable and there's no water or electricity. But by noon, it's been made habitable, and

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To our long-suffering subscribers - sorry! - computer & human malfunctions... we'll sort it out in '97. Contact us if you didn't get this one by post! Happy New Year!

the Conference is underway.

5 hours later, and up to 400 people have been discussing everything from green parenting to prisoner support; genetics to the ever increasing powers of the police - and stuffing their faces with vegan chocolate cake. The planned party is off - the building's too dangerous, and back at the other smaller squat the council have slapped on a noise abatement order before a note of music has been struck - but some acoustic bands still play and people party.

The theme of the Conference was about uniting different people in different struggles - about the fact that the DiY protest movement was never about single issues but against a system that puts profits and property before people. About getting off your arse and doing it for yourself. Voting with your feet and actions 365 days a year rather than crossing a box every four years. About not just fighting back but putting down positive building blocks - visions of the future.

### WRITE TO A PRISONER FOR CHRISTMAS...

**Satpal Ram** E94164 HMP Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7R serving a life sentence for defending himself against a racist attack \*\*\* **Clive Dalrymple** HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Rd., London, N7 8TT four years for running over a coppers foot \*\*\* **Marianne Keita**, H Wing HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HU French mother of four serving 16 years for drug offences. Limited knowledge of English - letters in French if you can please. \*\*\* **Paul Studhulm (Sky)** TJ 1655 HMP Reading, Forbury Rd., Reading. On remand for non-payment of fines during Newbury Bypass protests. Nicked while signing on. \*\*\* **Ronnie Easterbrook**, Belmarsh Prison, Western Way, Thamesmead, London, SE28.

## Newbury update

Newbury Bypass contractors Costain are still in the financial shit and have got another Extraordinary General Meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup> 10 a.m. at the Barbican Centre. Meanwhile, the Spiritual Roots camp was evicted on Wednesday. January 9-11<sup>th</sup> there's gonna be a Reunion Rampage - celebrating the anniversary of the first week when the forces of darkness were stopped successfully in their tracks, and if you ever wondered what all the fuss was about watch Channel 4 8.30pm next Tuesday - The Battle of Rickety Bridge.

## SchNEWS in brief...

People needed to stop clearance work at **Stringer's Common**, nr. Guildford. The A320 road widening scheme will cut a new route through woods, wet grassland, and an SSSI, cutting down hundreds of trees. More info/directions: 01483 32167 \*\*\* **The Early Learning Centre** are to discontinue a wooden train with a SHELL logo on it after just one complaint! \*\*\* November anti-consumer '**No Shop Day**' actions in Sheffield's 'MeadowHell', Manchester's Ardale Centre and Kensington High Street by aliens, monks and a walking, talking TV espousing the dangers of consumerism! \*\*\* A new

activist network has formed in the South West, called the **Somerset Activists Network**. Their first joint action saw them close a Shell garage last month, and more actions are planned for the new year. Contact them on 01458 851061. Next meeting on Jan 18<sup>th</sup> \*\*\* Dates for your diary: **Dec 18<sup>th</sup>** - Kirkstall Valley Campaign Action, opposing supermarket development. Info: 0113 262 9365. **19<sup>th</sup>** - Vigil outside Maidstone Prison for political prisoners Winston Silcott, Raphael Rowe & Oliver Cambell, 12 noon. Info: 01474 566701. **Jan 5<sup>th</sup>** - discussion about the future of the direct action movement at the 121 Centre in Brixton. Free pancakes! **6<sup>th</sup>** - Miners Support Group Action. Meet 10.30 at Chesterfield BR station car park. Make some fookin' noise! Info: 0171 6729698. **9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>** - Newbury Reunion Rampage & Rally. Details: 01635 45544. \*\*\* Check the **Zapatistas** web site: <http://planet.com.mx/~chiapas/> \*\*\* The US radical ecological publication **Live Wild or Die!** are being targeted by the authorities with one person being hassled by the FBI. Info from: Katuah EF!, Tennessee Valley Faction, 1414 Highland Avenue, Knoxville, TN 73916, USA \*\*\* Nice one to an aboriginal group from the Ma Kominsing Anishinawbeg tribe in North America, who blew up a bridge in Ontario in a battle to prevent logging and mining in old growth forests. \*\*\* Houseman's 1997 Peace Diary now available £6.95 from Houseman's Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Rd., London, N1 9DX, Tel: 0171 847 4473. Includes World Peace Directory, listing over 1900 active groups. \*\*\* The M77 opened Dec 6<sup>th</sup> and Pollock Free State dismantled - farewell, your spirit will live on...

## SchNEWSround!

Issues 51-100, photos, stories, coffee tables! Out *now* at an incredibly SchNEWS-funding £4.99. Phone us for your copy in time for Christmas!

## RIP Squatter Alex

On the early hours of Sunday morning 1<sup>st</sup> December Alex Balchin died in a tragic accident, falling from the roof of the old County Hall Building in London which was being squatted for a party. Alex might have seemed to have his head in the clouds, but he was an inspiration, bursting with ideas and a sense of fun. One of the main players behind the cheekiest squat of 1995 - the West Pier, seized in a dawn raid after the council evicted people from the beach huts; to the Nunnery in Hove, to the Squatters Estate Agents, where on the opening day he sat outside on a cushion with a sign asking passers-by to chat to him to find out about peace, love and inner happiness, Alex always had a smile on his face! He acted on his ideas, plotting and scheming, bringing colour into peoples lives. He will be deeply missed by everyone who knew and loved him. His funeral is on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2.30 p.m. at Worth crematorium. Coaches leaving from the New Kensington pub. Justice? sends our condolences to Robert and Jenny Balchin and brother Tom.