

Allow me to begin by expressing my solidarity for 250 of our members at express newspapers in London out on strike today against And in so doing sending solidarity to our 250 sisters and brothers at Express Newspapers in London who this morning, despite days of serious intimidation and threats walked out on strike. On strike in protest at the fact that their owner Richard Desmond has sucked more than £40m out of the newspapers whilst axing hundreds of jobs and imposing a below-inflation pay rise. They have done so to make a stand for journalism at a paper where proprietorial interference and meddling is undermining the credibility and the long-term future of the papers. I am with them in spirit today.

Let me too extend on behalf of our 39,000 members solidarity to you and your union and to thank you for the opportunity to be here and to discuss with you the challenges we each face.

And there couldn't be a more important time to do so. You only have to pick up today's local paper to see just how vital such discussions are – 3 articles each telling their own story about the state of our media – a new radio station dedicated solely to playing Christmas music, Shaw Communications hitting out at the CRTC for not deregulating the television industry fast enough and CBC's *the fifth estate*, picked out in the TV listings in a nostalgic way as an example of an old style of journalism facing budget cuts.

It was that great media scholar Kent Brockman, TV Newsreader on *The Simpsons* who said:  
*“Journalists used to question the reasons for war and expose the abuse of power. Now, like toothless babies they suckle on the sugary teat of misinformation and poop it in to the diaper we call the six o’clock news”.*

Of course things are not yet that bad. But unless we organise globally to meet the challenges posed by the decline of traditional media, the increasing concentration of media ownership and the profiteering at the expense of quality, the changes happening to our media run the risk of turning from a bad joke to a grim reality.

Alongside such challenges there is sweeping and fundamental technological change – podcasting, vidcasting, TV on demand, broadband TV, RSS and the convergence of media platforms. Such changes pose new problems, demand new working methods and open up new opportunities but in a globalised and increasingly insecure world, quality media – the collection and dissemination of quality information on which the public can make informed choices remains constant, indeed becomes ever more important.

At a time when media employers use that new technology, not to enhance journalism and build quality, but simply to reduce costs, undermine collective bargaining and boost profits, our role and our campaigns for quality are ever more vital.

And in the face of such fundamental changes we should be clear – we don't reject such technological change, don't seek to turn back the tide but to shape the future so it serves not the corporations but citizens, not the accountants but journalists, journalism and quality in media.

The real threat to quality comes not from technology, not from new media, not even from trends such as bloggers or citizen journalism but from those who treat information and news as nothing more than a commodity, from the domination of corporate interests not news values.

Of course we recognise the global decline in newspaper sales, changes in the way we work, the way news and information is consumed, changes in media regulation and media ownership affecting us all. But, contrary to the approach of media owners to this new environment, for us, in such a scenario reliable, balanced and quality information becomes not less but more important.

Whatever the media investing in quality content not short-term cost cutting is the best guarantee of long-term success.

For us as unions, that means the fight for quality, standards, ethics and integrity is and must remain central – starting out fighting for good terms and conditions and the professional standing of journalists and media workers *in* the workplace but

also extending out to build support in the communities we serve.

So let me turn to the situation we in the UK and Ireland are facing and how we have sought to meet the challenges. I have no doubt from the conversations I've had already since I've been here many key aspects will reflect your own experience.

Indeed there are many similarities between our media.

Like you our media industry is increasingly dominated by national and global media players, stretching from traditional media to telecommunications and beyond. Regional and sectoral monopolies abound. In Manchester for example every daily and weekly newspaper, local magazine, cable TV station and radio station with the exception of the BBC is owned by one company.

Cross media ownership has extended the corporations reach to every part of our media. Increasingly reliant on private equity or other investment capital it is increasingly driven to make short-term decisions solely in the interests of shareholders. Delivering audiences to advertisers has become the goal. Editorial decisions are therefore increasingly driven by commercial interests, perhaps best illustrated by the fact that just 2.4% of peak time TV output on commercial networks is now news and current affairs.

The shape of the new media industries is increasingly a result of global deals done under GATs or the aegis of the World Bank or as a result of deals done between politicians and media conglomerates in their own interests rather than by tough regulators acting in the public interest. So in our case we've seen rules prohibiting one company to dominate more than 20% of the advertising market swept away, cross-media and foreign ownership rules ditched.

In the national newspaper industry 4 groups control 84% of daily circulation and 86% of Sunday circulation. In local and regional media 5 corporate groups control over 75% of circulation and 82% of market share.

The same is true in magazines where consolidation has led to market dominance by four major companies. In radio the concentration is even greater. Take out the BBC and commercial radio, laughingly called Independent Radio, is now almost entirely controlled by just 2 companies with increasingly centralised news operations.

Despite a fall in ad revenues over the past 12 months profit margins still top 25% in a sector with low costs and high returns. Employment in the sector has declined by more than 10% in the past five years. News now makes up less than 3% of output.

The converged industries far from undermining that model simply reinforce it.

Across all media aggregated news services are outstripping original news sources in both audience share and yield.

Our newspaper and magazine industries are in decline. Multi-channel digital TV is putting our dominant traditional broadcasters and public service broadcasting under threat. Market share of public service broadcasters fell below 50% for the first time last year. The ownership of commercial TV has gone from 15 to just one company. The BBC's funding has declined in real terms and faces further pressures over the coming years.

Last year Google overtook the main commercial broadcaster as the UK's single biggest advertising platform.

In newspapers our situation is not as stark as that in the US where readership declined 60% in the last five years and advertising revenue was down 20% last year alone.

But the change is still huge.

In the UK just 45% of adults read a newspaper regularly. Of those that do free commuter newspapers which simply aggregate yesterday's news are becoming dominant.

Newspaper advertising revenue fell by around 9% last year. The number of adults reading one of our top 10 newspapers has declined by 24% over the past decade – for some titles the decline is much worse. The Daily Express has lost 54% of its readership, The Daily Mirror 49%. From its height in the 1980s, The Sun, our biggest selling daily has lost 2m readers a day.

Among the younger demographics the circulation collapse is even more marked. Among the 15-24

age groups readership has declined 37% and for the 25-34 age group by 40%.

Given our media companies are driven by the needs of shareholders to maintain profit levels such changes have had a direct impact on media workers in the UK. It has meant:

- 8000 job losses across the media in the last 3 years
- Surveys show that as a result of such job losses working hours have increased for more than half of all media workers. Those additional hours are being worked largely unpaid. Last year the industry benefited from more than \$960m worth of unpaid overtime.
- That as a result of short-staffing – 60% believe the quality of their media has been damaged.
- That such staffing shortages have led to a growth of young journalists on so-called work experience schemes or internships (in reality the use of cheap or free labour). Our latest survey, the biggest ever of its kind, shows that 77% of those surveyed had worked unpaid, more than one in three of them for up to six months at a time, that 60% received little or no training or support and that a staggering 77% of those who had work published or broadcast received no payments at all.
- With too few staff there has also become an increasing reliance on so-called citizen journalists to fill spaces left by the lack of trained professionals. There wasn't a single media organisation in our survey which now did

not make regular use of user generated content – only 5% ever paid for any of it. No one would deny that UGC can enhance the quality of media. Aftermath of London Tube bombings caught on mobile phone but what is much more common is the pictures of cute cats, village flower shows or amusingly shaped vegetables which now fill acres of space at the expense of professional news material.

- We've seen training budgets cut or young journalists forced to pay for their own training. Students now come out of college with average debts of \$34,000 and earn on average \$26,000 when starting out. Such realities are changing the social composition of large parts of our industry.
- We've seen an ongoing attack on wages and conditions and collective agreements. As companies move from traditional media to increasingly online they have used it as an opportunity to undermine terms and conditions. Where once journalists and media workers earned 121% of the wages of a teacher and 109% of that of a lecturer they now earn just 97 and 98% respectively. Starting rates for graduates coming in to media now are £7,000 below starting rates in comparable professions.
- We've also witnessed a surge in casualisation and forced freelancing. Job security is being undermined. In many cases the number of casual staff is reaching 15-20% in some workplaces. In our survey 90% of workplaces reported a growth in casualisation. Alongside

casualisation has come outsourcing.

Independent News and Media, Ireland's largest newspaper company, outsourced all of its subbing operations, The Times outsourced web design and maintenance to India, Reuters outsourced financial data reports to their massive new media centre in Bangalore.

- The demands of integration and convergence of media platforms mean a growth in 24/7 working yet there has been no corresponding growth in staffing levels.

Let me put a human face on this. It is often said nothing ever happens in Milton Keynes which according to our union rep is just as well because if it did they wouldn't have enough staff to cover it. Karen Jeffery our union rep at the Milton Keynes Citizen who this year staged a 3-day strike over pay and staffing levels – summed it up when she said “with fewer staff we produce a weekly entertainment title, a monthly lifestyle mag, a family mag, one for the kids and a raft of in-paper supplements and pullouts. The web swallows our copy and spits it out in to cyberspace. There is simply too much to do. Trips out of the office are a rarity. Most of the team are resigned to the fact that their job is to sit obediently and churn, churn, churn. One of the most gut-wrenching things is that there's no time to train the trainees, so they think this is what journalists do – sit at desks, sifting through press releases, making hurried phone calls, churning out, making do”.

It was maybe rather more succinctly summed up by Sean Dooley the editor of the Stoke Sentinell who on resigning described such an approach to media – corporate bollocks.

Bollocks or not such an approach has an impact not just on journalists and media workers but perhaps even more importantly on journalism and the quality of the media we produce.

In the UK we've seen in many media:

- The numbers of pages being cut/programme budgets slashed. In the newspaper industry we've seen major newspapers cut more than 2000 pages a year, we've seen up to a dozen newspapers fold completely in the last year. Companies are producing fewer newspaper local editions and offices and titles closed or merged in a drive towards centralised news provision and production.
- In broadcasting we've seen among our commercial Public Service Broadcasters programme budgets for regional news halved with plans to halve them again currently under discussion. Three quarters of Regional non-news programming has had budget cuts and more than 80% has been moved from prime time to graveyard slots. 2000 hours of regional programmes have been lost in the last 10 years. BBC funding fell \$300m this year and faces a further 2% year on year cut until 2012. Its funding is even more precarious after that.

- The result of all of this is less localised coverage, Staff shortages meaning more reliance on political or corporate PR. As a result of corporate control and concentration of ownership – the 1948 Royal Commission on the Press said that 7 companies owning over 40% of the press was a cause for concern. Today the top 4 newspaper companies own papers accounting for 86% of daily output. There is, as a result, a creeping editorial conformity and less risk-taking
- The cuts fall heaviest on resource intensive journalism so we've seen a decline in investigative journalism and a growth in celeb/PR news
- Staffing cuts mean fewer specialist reporters – Only a handful of local or regional newspapers have their own political correspondents, fewer cover local council or other meetings, most believe there is now less scrutiny of authority.
- Print deadlines changed to suit the needs of commercial printing concerns leading to earlier deadlines and a lesser ability to cover news outside of core hours

This is increasingly the world of journalism today – laid bare in Nick Davies book *Flat Earth News*

*“This is life in a news factory. No reporter who is turning out nearly 10 stories every shift can possibly do his or her job properly. No reporter who spends only 3 hours out of the office in an entire working*

*week can possibly develop enough good leads or build enough good contacts. No reporter who speaks to only 26 people in researching 48 stories can possibly be checking their truth.*

*This is churnalism. This is journalists unable to perform the simple basic functions of their profession; quite unable to tell their readers the truth about what is happening on their patch. This is journalists who are no longer out gathering news but who are reduced instead to passive processors of whatever material comes their way, churning out stories, whether real event or PR artifice, important or trivial, true or false”.*

And most worryingly in this corporate-controlled media world the truth becomes less important. Nothing matters as long as it brings in the advertising revenues and sells papers/programmes to advertisers.

And so we have the scenario of a national daily newspaper which makes wild claims that 1.6m Roma will arrive in the UK as border controls in Europe are eased – and it repeats such apocalyptic visions of a UK swamped by foreigners day after day knowing them to be untrue – but it does so because it estimates that such lurid headlines add 20,000 to daily sales.

Faced with that kind of competitive pressure and casualisation and job insecurity is it any wonder journalists feel under pressure to make the facts fit the story rather than the other way round.

And is it any wonder in this environment that public trust in journalism is declining. It is a sad indictment of our industry in the UK that just we have fallen below real estate agents in the trust stakes.

Such distrust has an impact beyond journalism – it undermines democracy and promotes disengagement from the democratic process.

Of course all of this would be bad enough in a failing industry but our media industry is not. Last year the print industry made \$8bn profit. Trinity Mirror our largest newspaper publisher recorded profits of \$500,000 – every single day. Returns on investment have fallen from the giddy heights of 40% a few years ago but are still averaging in excess of 25%, 30% for the big 4 regional publishers.

Many of the new challenges we face are a result of the drive towards multimedia working. A drive which has accelerated over the past year.

In the UK we've witnessed a massive growth in new and converged media. The newspaper trade association now represents 1400 websites compared to 1100 newspapers.

68% of publishers now use podcasts, 72% integral video, 52% vid-casting and 66% are producing content specifically for mobiles. Delivering news and marketing using behavioural targeting is now part of the operations of 84% of companies.

The Association of Online Publishers latest report released just this week shows digital revenue up 52% this year with an expectation it will rise a further 86% next year. Online advertising spend last year was \$2.6bn, around a 15% market share. Online video traffic is up by 178%. Our largest regional newspaper group saw its profits rise from online operations by 110% last year.

Whilst newspaper circulation is in decline web traffic at linked sites is up – at The Daily Mail by 163%, at the Telegraph by 65%, at The Sun by 40% and at The Times by 39%.

But what is also clear is this sector is like all others becoming increasingly dominated by the same corporations as control other media. Small independent companies are struggling to survive in the face of a corporate onslaught – indeed employment in small new media companies has declined.

But as corporations rush unblinking towards the next great media gold rush the reality for too many online workers was exposed by those who contributed to the NUJ's Commission on Multimedia Working – like the Newsquest employee who exposed that the online challenge is being met by forcing already over-worked trainees to work evenings and weekends for no extra cash.

Our six month investigation in to the state of the online industry showed the scale of the challenges we face in new media.

Here are the headlines:

75% of workplaces report that integration has brought increased workloads, rising stress and longer hours. In less than a third of cases have the changes in working practices required to deliver 24/7 multi-platform working been negotiated. Just 22% had received extra pay for taking on additional skills or duties and just over half said that despite increased workloads their pay had remained the same. Few companies have matched the expansion of their online operations by recruiting enough extra staff to satisfy the raging appetite for new media output only 36% had dedicated new media staffing - and as a result 75% said integration had led to increased workloads and almost 40% were working beyond their contracted hours.

The evidence in workplaces to date has largely shown that the introduction of new `media platforms has been accompanied by the watering down of terms, conditions and pay.

New recruits to online working are taken on often on inferior terms, both lower pay and longer hours.

And all of these are impacting on quality. Some companies are expecting levels of multiskilling – research it, write it, sub it, headline it, film it, record it, edit it as well as writing two different versions for the web – all too often with insufficient training.

One respondent told us: *“I cannot sufficiently carry out the tasks they are asking me to perform, let alone mentally. You would need to be an octopus to be able to do everything they want doing”*

Our survey found just 7% of companies were providing adequate across the board training and that health and safety concerns were absent from the vast majority of training.

And the same corporate strategies to drive profit are driving the news agenda.

One Archant journalist told our commission *“There is a real pressure on the web team to bring in advertising through positive news”*. A Newsquest journalist told us: *“They don’t really want interviews on their video reports... when a video of pig-racing will bring in ten times as much traffic”*. More worryingly one told us: *“Police will send us video footage of a drugs raid. We would never run a press release from the police word for word, but we seem happy to do it with their video”*.

It is clear across all sectors of the industry we face threats.

It is those threats which has driven our responses from our industrial organising to our Stand up for Journalism campaign – a campaign:

- Exposing the threats to media and the democratic process by commercialisation and cost-cutting
- Building alliances with readers, viewers, listeners and civil society we serve to promote quality
- Turning the public spotlight on the profiteers

- Informing public opinion and exerting pressure to put investment in quality journalism at the heart of the media
- Demanding professional codes of practices/standards, laws and regulations are enforced
- Campaigning for a stronger commitment to plurality and diversity and for a media policy which serves citizens, listeners, viewers and readers.

Our campaign this year staged a union-wide day of action – with dozens of events in towns and cities across the UK and Ireland.

Our current campaigns focus on plans to halve regional news at ITV. Last week we lobbied Parliament. Next week we begin lobbying the regulator. In local areas we have high profile campaigns out on the streets, petitions, dedicated websites, targeted material, bringing staff and freelances together.

For us the campaign for quality media is not a luxury addition to our union organising but central to it – so it should be for unions globally.

That campaign and our work takes many forms – making recruitment our priority, using the courts, providing training, active lobbying, education, protests and where necessary strikes and industrial action like that today at the Express.

As part of that we call on others to act and we are right to do so – for improved freedom of information, for rights to protect sources, for fair and enforceable regulation, for employment rights for all irrespective of employment status, a commitment to public service broadcasting and more besides

But we know that's not enough – the only way to protect quality is to build strong unions.

Just as media workers are at the sharp end of these changes so as media unions we should be at the heart of the solution. In fact we must be because no one else will do it for us.

It means our unions must adapt – finding new ways to organise – across groups not just by sector - investing resources in organising and recruitment (we have in the past three years doubled the resources devoted to organising), taking on more organising staff where necessary, sometimes having to make tough choices about cutting union bureaucracy in the process.

It is vital we reach new layers of workers.

We need to reach out to young journalists and student members – my own union does so through an annual student conference, student branches and campaigns focused on issues such as work experience and trainee pay, setting up student membership and blogs..

We must reach out to bloggers and citizen journalists and engage with the public through

meetings, protests and education campaigns about the state of the media.

At an international level we must share experience and work together in the face of a globalised media where outsourcing is a threat to us all. We are already working with the US union on campaigns at Gannett and Reuters.

It means finding new ways to reach freelances, building freelance networks, it means recruiting new reps and training and empowering them, it means building alliances with MPs, community groups and campaigners, it means backing up words with action, using the courts and industrial action where necessary.

And where we do we can demonstrate it works. I have painted a sometimes bleak picture of the state of parts of our industry. There are those who in face of corporate power and political apathy are pessimistic, those who believe they are powerless. Not me. Not us. We demonstrate every day, that united, campaigning, active and organised, staff and freelance we make a difference.

Take the new media industry. We called our investigation Shaping the Future – and we are. It is no accident that where the union is strongest and best organised the agreements for multimedia working are the best. They deliver voluntarism, better pay, agreements on hours and working conditions, proper training and health and safety provision.

As the investigation began, our members at The Guardian and Observer were preparing for battle over plans to move to 24/7 multi-platform working. Threats of industrial action, endless hours of talks and a determined campaign, helped by our 98% membership density, delivered a ground-breaking agreement – delivering up to 10% pay increases, additional rewards for new skills and new working patterns, a commitment to adequate staffing and quality journalism, and by an understanding that change by agreement and with fair reward delivers more than change by imposition.

No sooner had The Guardian dispute kicked off than the BBC announced 2500 job losses, linked at least in part to greater integration of their news operations. Demanding no compulsory redundancies, proper health and safety protection, proper protections on workloads, training and up-skilling we reached a new agreement – and we've done so with no compulsory redundancies.

And it doesn't end there. We have secured other new workplace agreements on pay parity for web journalists, guarantees on training, commitments to minimum staffing levels, rigorous health and safety policies, guarantees on workloads and working hours and in one major local newspaper group what is in effect the first new national agreement we have secured for 30 years on the introduction of new media. We are not always successful but we are

engaged in the debate on the future shape of journalism.

Even in climate of thousands of job losses we've seen increase in membership of more than 10% in last five years with the fastest growth in the new media sector.

It remains a fact – new media or old – that in unionised workplaces PAY is on average 16% higher than in non-unionised workplaces  
There are fewer REDUNDANCIES and where there are redundancies they are more likely to be voluntary and with better terms. Unionised workplaces have on average longer holidays and less sickness

So this conference must be much more than a chance to bemoan the state of our industry. It presents us with an opportunity to organise to resist and reverse the job cuts, the attacks on public service broadcasting, to organise for improved pay, to challenge the corporate news models which drive down wages and quality while driving up share prices, to campaign for a media in which news values are central.

I look forward tonight and tomorrow to talking with you about how we together can build the global solidarity vital to such a campaign.