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what we think

Murdochgate – corruption exposed at every level of a rotten system

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In the wake of the latest revelations, politicians, capitalist reporters and commentators, and the police who hid the evidence of criminal activity by Murdoch employees – including those at the top of NI, chief executive Rebekah Brooks and Murdoch's son James, were all hypocritically and nauseatingly scrambling over one another to distance themselves from their former patron.

Alastair Campbell, public relations front man for former Labour prime minister Tony Blair, rubbished weapons expert David Kelly and journalist Andrew Gilligan for telling the truth about the Iraq war 'dodgy dossier' and Saddam Hussain's alleged weapons of mass destruction.

Now, with a straight face, he writes in the Financial Times [11 July]: "At the reception [for Rebekah Brooks' wedding] I had a brief conversation with Mr Cameron. I said I hoped he would not win the upcoming election, but that if he did, and if he wanted to act to improve political debate and standards in the press, I would support him... 'It's got worse, hasn't it?' he said. I replied that he would be a much stronger prime minister were he to take office not feeling he owed anything to the big media groups."

"At that point Mr Murdoch joined us, and we changed the subject. Perhaps we should not have done so. That we did, however, illustrated something of the dishonesty at the heart of what are essentially political and commercial relationships."

Cameron has even had the brass neck to argue 'we were all in it together' in kowtowing to Murdoch. Well we socialists aren't!

Socialists vilified

All those who fought back against capitalism were vilified mercilessly by the Murdoch and right wing gutter media in general. Tony Benn, when he stood for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party in 1981, was compared to Hitler, as was miners' leader Arthur Scargill before, during and after the 1980s miners' strike.

The heroic Liverpool Militants in the 1980s, along with those who scored a victory over Thatcher in the epic battle against the hated poll tax, were singled out for special treatment.

Scottish anti-poll tax leader and socialist Tommy Sheridan is in jail today, convicted of perjury because of a personal vendetta by Murdoch, who reportedly vowed to 'get this little communist'.

The latest revelations have subsequently demonstrated that the successful prosecution of Tommy was only made possible by the lies and cover-up given to the court by Murdoch's 'witnesses'.

These included the Scottish editor of the NoW and Cameron's communications director, Andy Coulson, who claimed they knew nothing of phone-hacking or payments to police officers. They clearly misled the jury and were also guilty of denying the existence of emails and other evidence which would have helped Tommy in court.

Cameron, Osborne and the rest of the gang that dominate this illegitimate Coalition government cannot be allowed to just distance themselves from Murdoch now. Cameron and his wife wine and dined, and 'hacked', in the horse-riding sense, with Rebekah Brooks and James Murdoch. They were as thick as thieves in what was dubbed the 'Chipping Norton' set. Cameron unbelievably still describes Coulson as a 'friend': 'Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.'

More importantly, this affair has exposed the virtual stranglehold which Murdoch has exerted over British government policy and all important aspects of life in the last decades.

One Murdoch editor told John Major – the



Poll tax rebels and other fighters earned Murdoch's venom photo Steve Gardiner

previous Tory prime minister – that he would pour 'a big bucket of shit' over his head if he did not comply with Murdoch's orders. Andrew Rawnsley, of the Observer, commented that "the foul stuff was duly tipped over him".

Blair famously flew to Australia to get on his knees to Murdoch in order to gain his support before the 1997 election. Once Blair was elected, Murdoch was often referred to as the '24th member of the Cabinet'!

Labour shame

Murdoch visited Blair three times personally in order to pressurise him on behalf of George Bush to support the Iraq invasion. Not that Blair needed all that much persuasion. But it is a fact that the mass of the British people demonstrated unequivocal opposition to this; but that was seen as incidental. The diktats of American imperialism, through the medium of Murdoch, were pre-eminent.

Moreover, we learn now that as Blair was preparing to leave Downing Street in 2007, Murdoch was already lurking in a Bentley ready and eager to see the new man Gordon Brown to press on him his orders!

It is to the eternal shame of 'Labour' leaders that it has been media 'personalities' like Hugh Grant and comedians like Steve Coogan who have been left to tell some of the truth about NoW and Murdoch. Coogan stated on Newsnight [8 July]: "People keep saying it is a very bad day for the press. It is a wonderful day for the press: a small victory for decency and humanity... People talk as if they [NoW] have fallen below their usual high

standards. They were already in the gutter, it is just that they have sunk lower than anyone thought they could."

Even now, with his back to the wall, Murdoch, through his acolytes, has warned new Labour leader Ed Miliband that News Corporation 'will turn on him and his staff' for having the temerity to demand the resignation of Rebekah Brooks at the same time as he expressed opposition to the BSkyB deal going ahead.

However Miliband demanded this only after the scandal of the Milly Dowler hacking was revealed. Moreover, his strategy director, Tom Baldwin, was urging Labour MPs only a few weeks ago not to raise the issue of Murdoch's takeover of BSkyB!

Miliband sipped champagne while attending Murdoch's summer party just weeks previous to this! He now claims this was merely a 'social occasion'! Nothing could be further from the truth. All the evidence shows that Murdoch invitees are there to be politically 'nobbled', to ensure that political leaders of all the main parties toe Murdoch's line. If they don't, they can expect the kind of treatment meted out to the 'uncompliant'.

Warped democracy

Murdoch even tried to use Tony Blair to lean on Gordon Brown when he was prime minister to silence Labour MP Tom Watson, who has courageously been to the forefront together with Guardian journalists like Nick Davies in exposing this scandal.

All of this indicates the warped character

of British 'democracy'. The Observer, in its 10 July 2011 editorial, admits as much: "Over 40 years, Murdoch convinced the establishment that he can make or break political reputations and grant or take away electoral success. In doing so, he has come close to gelding parliament, damaging the rights of citizens and undermining democracy."

Everyone can have their say and vote as they like so long as the big capitalists and the hired liars in the press and the media can decide what happens. It is not just Murdoch who exercises semi-dictatorial rule in seeking to shape public opinion in Britain.

Equally undemocratic are those press moguls like Paul Dacre of the Mail group whose journalists often dip their pens in mad-dog saliva against individuals and the labour movement.

The concentration of media ownership has now produced a situation whereby ten corporations own 75% of the media. This has resulted in huge job losses among journalists. 200 journalists and other staff have lost their jobs with the closure of the News of the World. We can honestly say that we do not regret the demise of this muckraking paper.

But no one can support, in a period of mass unemployment, people being thrown out of their jobs and in such an arbitrary fashion. And how many tears were shed by the capitalists for the thousands of workers who lost their jobs when Murdoch moved his newspapers lock, stock and barrel to Wapping in 1986?

However, the current undemocratic situation of the press and the media in Britain will not be cured by a few cosmetic measures such as 'the strengthening of the press complaints committee'. This will be no more effective in checking anti-working class gutter journalism than police violence will be checked by the police investigating themselves.

Nor is it sufficient merely to call, as some on the left incredibly have done, for the 'break-up of the Murdoch Empire'. We don't want mini-Murdochs to replace the slain monster.

All those responsible for violating the confidentiality and rights of individuals should be brought to book, charged and if found guilty should receive the appropriate punishment. But even if this was to happen it would not alter one jot the grip exercised by undemocratic forces – beholden to capitalism – over the media.

Socialist media

New alternative socialist media must be built by the trade unions and working people. But this must be accompanied by raising now the need, in the first instance, for the democratic nationalisation of the printing presses, television and radio under democratic popular management and control – beginning with the state take-over of the resources of News Corporation, which has demonstrated that it is a danger to democracy itself.

We, the working class and the labour movement, do not want to take over the Sun, the Daily Mail or even the 'august' Guardian.

We opposed the state monopoly of news and information that existed in Stalinist states. The real alternative is democratic working class and popular control of the press and media in general.

This will not result in a monopoly for the government or one party but allow access to the media in proportion to political support. Capitalism and Stalinism defend undemocratic control of the media by a minority.

Socialists stand for taking the 'production of information' out of the hands of a minority and into the hands of the majority, which would allow full freedom of discussion and decision-making.