

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

SPECIAL

Setting the **ORGREAVE** *Record* *Straight*

An excerpt from

**SETTLING SCORES:
THE MEDIA,
THE POLICE AND
THE MINERS' STRIKE**

Edited by Granville Williams



Setting the Orgreave record straight

An excerpt, by **Granville Williams**, from a new book on the 30th anniversary of the British miners' strike of 1984–85 shows how police falsified statements after the Battle of Orgreave, when 95 miners were charged with rioting

"We had a very fortunate collision of timing, the right elements being at the right time to bring it altogether and strike a chord."

– Dan Johnson



Sometimes television programmes can catch the mood of the time and stimulate action by individuals and institutions. The BBC *Inside Out* programme on Orgreave which went out in the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region on 22 October 2012 did just that. The core of the programme was the revelation by BBC reporter, Dan Johnson, that a batch of South Yorkshire Police (SYP) witness statements for miners arrested at Orgreave [on June 18, 1984, during the miners' strike] demonstrated the extent of police fabrication of the evidence.

The programme was aired just one month after the Hillsborough Independent Panel (HIP) report [into the 1989 disaster when 96 soccer fans were killed], which triggered a stream of announcements that ensured the behaviour of SYP was rarely out of the news in the weeks

following. On 14 September, two days after the panel's report was published, West Yorkshire Chief Constable, Norman Bettison, a SYP chief inspector at the time of the Hillsborough disaster, issued a statement saying fans 'made the job of the police... harder than it needed to be' and then issued a second statement in which he apologised for appearing to partially blame supporters. On 12 October

the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) said it was launching the biggest-ever inquiry into police behaviour in the wake of the HIP report and on 24 October Bettison resigned as chief constable of West Yorkshire with immediate effect. Three weeks after the *Inside Out* programme SYP self-referred their conduct at Orgreave to the IPCC mentioning the programme and naming the reporter Dan Johnson personally in the referral.

I first met Dan Johnson at a national Union of Mineworkers' weekend school in Scarborough in December 2008. I mentioned that I was trying to pin down at

The core of the programme was the revelation by BBC reporter, Dan Johnson, that a batch of South Yorkshire Police witness statements for miners arrested at Orgreave demonstrated the extent of police fabrication of the evidence



**Settling Scores::
The Media, The Police
& the Miners' Strike**

Edited by
Granville Williams

Campaign for Press &
Broadcasting Freedom

Price: £6.99

THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

For his student dissertation he had spoken to one of the miners who was at Orgreave, one of those charged, tried and acquitted, and he remembered that he had all the statements, not just the ones relating to his own arrest but the ones relating to everybody's arrest

which pit the hilarious snowman incident really occurred. Dave Douglass tells it like this in *All Power to the Imagination*:

“The miners of Silverwood, having been told they were confined to six pickets only, built themselves a seventh comrade in the shape of a large snowman, wearing for good measure a plastic policeman's helmet.

“Next morning, Chief Inspector Nesbitt appears on the scene and seeing the jeering miners and their steely eyed companion, ordered the constables to knock it down. This order brought rebellion to the police ranks as PCs declined to, ‘look so fucking stupid knocking down a snowman’. ‘Very well,’ shouts the irate Nesbitt, jumping in his Range Rover and charging off to demolish the snowman, as pickets ran laughing for cover.

“Maybe it was a trick of the light, or maybe a twinkle glistened in the icy countenance on the snowman's fixed expression – we shall never know, as the Range Rover made contact and came to a dead stop, smashing front grill, bumper and headlamps and hurling the shocked Nesbitt into the steering wheel. PCs found excuses to walk away or suppress body-shaking laughter while pickets fell about on the ground with side splitting mirth. The snowman had been constructed around a three foot high two foot thick concrete post!”

Dan contacted John Nesbitt, at the time of the strike the SYP chief superintendent who arrested NUM President Arthur Scargill at Orgreave on 30 May 1984. Nesbitt's name was always associated with the story but he told Dan the incident never happened. Nesbitt cited as evidence the fact that the South Yorkshire Police Authority ordered an inspection of all Range Rovers for damage and they couldn't find anything. He conceded, however, that his association with the story caused him some career problems.

Dan Johnson was born in Barnsley. “I

grew up with the stories about the strike, took an interest, and always had a sense there was unfinished business there, something had not been told to people's satisfaction,” he said. (1) His interest in the miners' strike (he was born half way through it) developed whilst studying for a geography degree at Leeds University when he was researching energy policy. His dissertation was on the miners' strike, with a focus on police tactics. He also did a couple of articles about pit closures for the student paper. Later, after a post-graduate journalism course at City University, he got work with Radio Sheffield covering the decline of coal mining, the closure of Rossington pit and later Maltby.

Making the programme

The idea for the programme came from an article by David Conn in *The Guardian*. It made the connection between the SYP behaviour at Hillsborough and the way miners described their actions at Orgreave and other events during the miners' strike. (2) “But Conn had not nailed it,” Dan said. “There wasn't any evidence to actually prove it. I was thinking about it and I know the *Inside Out* team were thinking about it separately. It was only when the Hillsborough panel report was published and there was that clear evidence about police statements being changed and the prime minister gave a full apology and announced the steps that would be taken to remedy the injustice that we heard mutterings ‘that's not the first time statements were altered by SYP’ but again the question was ‘how do you prove it – where's the evidence?’”

The idea that the statements had been altered sparked a tiny f icker in his mind. For his student dissertation he had spoken to one of the miners who was at Orgreave, one of those charged, tried and acquitted, and he remembered that he had all the





“As soon as you start looking through them you realised the second one is the same as the first one and the third one the same as the second – you start recognising the pattern”

TV reporter Dan Johnson with the bundle of documents that contained the evidence of police collusion, the same phrasing appearing in many of the statements.

statements, not just the ones relating to his own arrest but the ones relating to everybody’s arrest. Dan had looked at these way back in 2005-06 for his dissertation, thought them very interesting, a bit of history, flicked through them, and gave them back. But after the Hillsborough report he thought ‘that’s it’ – the former miner had got the evidence and he managed to get in touch with him and obtain the statements.

“There were 120 original statements mouldering away in a garage, quite stained and smelly, but definitely the genuine article, with just one page missing. As soon as you start looking through them you realised the second one is the same as the first one and the third one the same as the second – you start recognising the pattern,” Dan said.

He pays tribute to the people he worked with on the programme, particularly the ‘very good’ researcher, Lucy Smickersgill. “The *Inside Out* team really came into its

own, being able to go through the statements, analyse exactly what phrases are repeated and how many times,” he said. “They did a cross reference to how many officers had used exactly the same phrases word for word and which force those officers were from. They pieced together an analytical breakdown of how much repetition there was.”

The statements also gave the names of the officers. The next task was tracking down the officers named in the statements. Dan recalls the overwhelming impression that the police didn’t want to talk about it. Some were very angry about being contacted.

One in particular he remembers: “I went round to his house, he lived locally and his wife answered the door, and I just explained what we were doing and asked if he could get in touch. She obviously rang him straight away and he rang me from work as I was driving away: ‘What are you doing knocking on my door, interfering with



THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

The police version of events at Orgreave was that there had been a violent assault on the police and there had been no choice but to send in the mounted police

my wife. You've no right. How have you found me? This is absolutely atrocious. I am astounded that the BBC is trying to hunt people down to talk about these issues 30 years on. Disgraceful. No, I do not want to talk about it. Leave me alone – your approach is definitely unwelcome.”

A few spoke anonymously and a couple were willing to appear on camera and talk about their statements. One in particular described how he was sent into a room and a CID officer came in and said, “Here's the way you start your statement.” His claim was that all the CID officer was doing was setting the scene, giving them a generic description of what happened at Orgreave that day, but that he wrote down his own details of the arrests he made.

Although Dan hasn't had any contact with the police officers since he says, “I have a suspicion they may feel regret for being involved now they realise the impact the programme has had.”

The other key element for a credible programme involved the former miners whose names were on the witness statements. Some had passed away, but others didn't want to be interviewed. Of the miners contacted it was evenly split between those willing to participate and those strongly against it. “When some of the miners don't want to be involved you start questioning the whole thing then,” Dan said. “You think are we actually pursuing a worthy aim here? Having grown up with these stories and hearing that an injustice was done



Michael Mansfield: “The police had no idea of the extent to which their unlawful activities were being filmed.”

at Orgreave it was a little bit frustrating when you say ‘I am trying to highlight this and address it’. I don't know if it was because it was personally difficult to revisit some of this stuff or because they don't think it will achieve anything, or they think so much time has passed and they have so little faith in the system that they want to leave it alone. It was very pleasing in the end that some of those who didn't want speak to us, when they saw the programme, contacted us to say ‘good job, wish I had done.’”

The programme fell into place then. “We needed to tell the history of the strike, the key events, and fill in the background to Orgreave for people who didn't know the story. That was enough for us to sell the programme,” he said.

The programme

Dan Johnson's introduction links the two events of Hillsborough and Orgreave: “While Hillsborough resonated around the world, what happened at Orgreave has been left as a footnote in history,” he says.

A rapid summary of the key events of the miners' strike up to Orgreave in June 1984 follows, placing events at Orgreave in the context of a previous miners' victory – the closure of the coking plant in Birmingham during the 1972 strike. (3) “Saltley acted as a template for the picketing at Orgreave 10 years later only this time the miners placed a police force and a government determined not to be beaten,” he comments. Ten thousand miners were at Orgreave on 18 June with at least five



thousand police from many different police forces from across the country, there to stop the miners shutting the coking plant. Dramatic footage of the mounted police charge is interspersed with commentary from Yvette Vanson (who made the powerful *Battle of Orgreave* in 1985), the former Hadfield Colliery miner Dave Douglass and two police officers.

Michael Mansfield represented several miners in the first Orgreave trial of miners held in Sheffield in 1985. In the programme he points out that police video footage of events that day show a completely different picture to the one the BBC and most other media broadcast. The police version was that there had been a violent assault on the police and there had been no choice but to send in the mounted police. But there were also a lot of independent monitors, with notebooks, cameras and one with a movie camera in a tree. Mansfield says, "The police had no idea of the extent to which their unlawful activities were being filmed. Putting the combination of that package together you had a record, an almost unchallengeable record, of a completely different version of events."

Stef Wysocki, a former Derbyshire miner, gives his shocking testimony of his treatment that day when he was arrested: "I hadn't done anything so I didn't think I would get charged. When I was arrested at the top of the hill there were a lot of photos of me with no injuries but when I got to



Stef Wysocki: "I was punched, kicked, prodded, you name it. I walked in and I was nearly carried out."

the bottom of the hill I'd got injuries while I was in their custody...Bruises, facial cuts, bleeding. I was marched down the field, both arms behind my back, and when we got to the police line I was banged onto the police shields, they bounced me off, the shields opened and I was punched, kicked, prodded, you name it. I walked in and I was nearly carried out."

When the miners were put on trial in Sheffield the case collapsed in spectacular style after 16 weeks when it became clear the police evidence wasn't reliable. Dan Johnson compares the fabri-

cation of police witness statements at Orgreave and Hillsborough and says that the manipulation of police witness statements at Orgreave appeared to be even more manipulated than at Hillsborough. He cites one example where 31 officers from four different forces used this identical phrase:

'As we stood there in the line a continuous stream of missiles came from the pickets into the police line... there were no shields being used at this point'. He asks, based on the extensive fabrication of evidence in the statements, whether it was the intention of the police to present evidence to support a charge of riot – which carried severe penalties – rather than a public order offence, which would mean a fine.

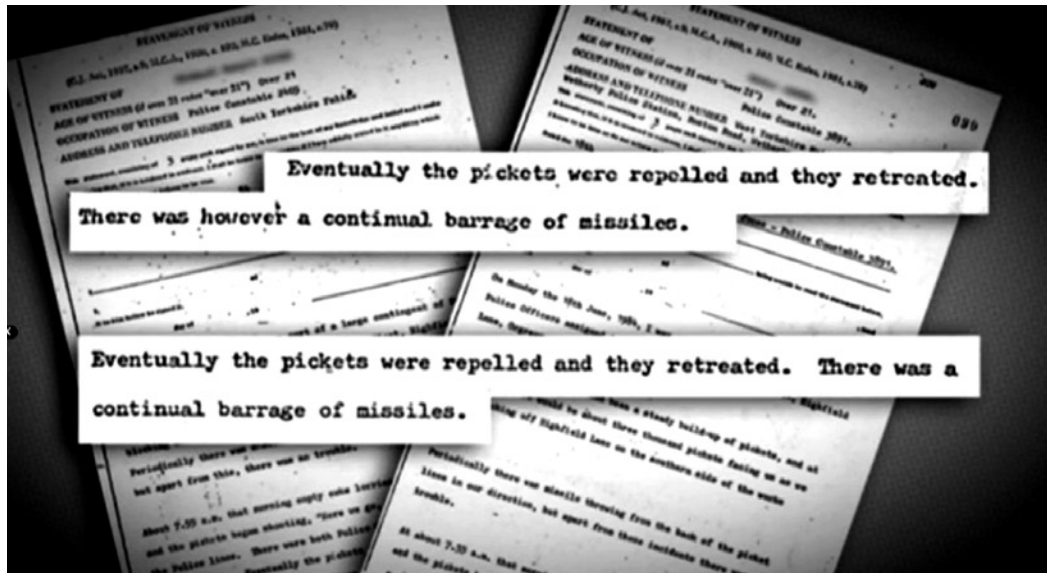
Vera Baird, who also represented miners at the trial, comments on the behaviour of SYP detectives who told police officers what to write: "You can see in a way that they were trying to set the scenario but what they were actually doing was 'teeing

"Not a single police officer was prosecuted, even the one caught on camera beating a defenceless miner to the ground in one famous case. Not a single police officer prosecuted, not a single police officer even disciplined"



THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

Mark George, a Sheffield barrister, after analysing the statements, concludes the level of repetition in the statements provided enough evidence for the charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice



Different statements, same words: Part of the evidence of Yorkshire police collusion, exposed by the reporting of Dan Johnson for the BBC programme, *Inside Out*.

up’, perverting the course of justice.”

In the final section of the programme Michael Mansfield points to the miscarriage of justice at Orgreave: “Not a single police officer was prosecuted, even the one caught on camera beating a defenceless miner to the ground in one famous case. Not a single police officer prosecuted, not a single police officer even disciplined.”

Mark George, a Sheffield barrister and an independent voice with no previous involvement in the Orgreave case, after analysing the statements, concludes the level of repetition in the statements provided enough evidence for the charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

The impact of the programme

On the same evening the *Inside Out* programme went out an hour-long special *Panorama* programme was to be shown at 10.35pm investigating what the BBC knew about Jimmy Savile, his actions and the events around the dropping of the Corporation’s own *Newsnight* investigation into the subject. The *Panorama* programme led all

the bulletins but the Orgreave programme got some good pre-publicity. *Breakfast News*, *Look North* and *The Guardian* ran it that morning. The *Today* programme and 5 Live ran it as well as local radio stations. Yvette Cooper, Labour MP for the former mining areas Pontefract and Castleford and Shadow Home Secretary, mentioned it in Parliament and said it needed investigation. Lunchtime national news ran it with a plug to watch it. Local papers ran it the next day or later in the week. But the big outcome from the programme was, as Dan Johnson, “Three weeks after SYP did self-referral to the IPCC and the programme and I were mentioned in the referral so it’s pretty obvious what sparked the SYP decision.”

He thinks the programme was, “A good example of regional current affairs television, and I don’t see that going on anywhere else. The BBC is doing this and is able to shout about it on wider platforms. It is the only place I can see that I could make films like this. There have been cuts to regional news and current affairs but *Inside Out*



hasn't lost its capacity to make programmes though they are often now shared more widely across regions."

The programme won the regional O2 media award for Scoop of the Year in May 2013 and the Royal Television Society Best Factual Programme award in June 2013.

Broader issues

Dan Johnson's Orgeave programme stands out as a good example of regional investigative journalism which makes a difference. However, local and regional journalism, both print and broadcast, have been subjected to huge pressures, particularly since the recession of 2008. These pressures have been due to commercial greed and short-sightedness by regional newspaper groups, successive governments' deregulatory policies which have seen the effective dismantling of ITV's regional structure that sustained vibrant news and current affairs programming, and the ideological assault on the BBC licence fee in 2010 by the then Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt.

Regional newspaper groups up to the 2008 recession were incredibly profitable, but a combination of declining sales, loss of advertising revenue though the economic downturn and increasing Internet competition has led regional newspaper groups to cut jobs, close titles and pursue policies which make it increasingly difficult for local and regional newspapers to fulfil their vital democratic role as local watchdogs. In July 2009 Bedworth, a small former mining town in the Midlands, lost its weekly newspaper, the *Bedworth Echo*. It was one of nearly 50 which its owner Trinity Mirror closed over 18 months in 2008-09. Bedworth became a 'town without news'. In 1972 when Pete Lazenby started on the *Yorkshire Evening Post* (YEP) there were 200 journalists working across the YEP and the *Yorkshire Post*. When he left there were 60. In the 15 months up to January 2014 30% of

the journalists on the papers were lost. The papers are owned by Johnston Press, one of the big four regional newspaper groups. In February 2014, Newsquest, another of the big-four regional newspaper groups, provoked votes for industrial action by journalists on papers like the *Northern Echo*, *Darlington and Stockton Times* and *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* over an ill-conceived plan to move sub-editing operations of these papers to a central hub 270 miles away in Newport, South Wales. (4)

ITV Yorkshire is a pale shadow of what used to be an independent ITV franchise, Yorkshire Television or YTV, which served the region well. It is now part of a single ITV structure for England and Wales and any sense of a strong journalistic presence in the Yorkshire region has been diminished. The broadcasting regulator Ofcom has allowed ITV to reduce its public service obligations to provide high-quality, well-resourced news and current affairs for all ITV regions. In Yorkshire it means that the single *Calendar* programme at 6.00pm is required to carry more news originating not from the region but from ITV/ITN News in London.

The BBC too is still coming to terms with a shabby, behind-closed-doors deal on the licence fee in October 2010. During 48 hours Mark Thomson BBC Director General, Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt and the chair of the BBC Trust Sir Michael Lyons

In 1972 when Pete Lazenby started there were 200 journalists working at the Yorkshire Evening Post and the Yorkshire Post. When he left there were 60



Click on the link below to read an excerpt from *SHAFTED*, Granville Williams's previous book on the British miners' strike

<http://www.coldtype.net/Assets.09/pdfs/0309.Shafted.pdf>



THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

If we value our local and regional media we have to speak out in their defence

agreed to freeze the licence fee until 2017 while taking on £340 million extra spending commitments for the BBC World Service, the roll-out of broadband in rural areas and funding local TV and online services. (5) The consequence of the deal was job losses and a 20 per cent spending cut across the BBC.

If we value our local and regional media we have to speak out in their defence. Journalists, who have no control over the decisions made by top management, show up every day, doing their best to produce good quality reporting. They're often frustrated and even angry at the obstacles placed in front of them. Despite the low pay and high stress of their jobs, they still want to do their best. And at their best they hold local politicians, the police and bullying bosses to account. They are a voice for people angry at bureaucratic incompetence and in



support of local campaigns for traffic crossings and swimming baths. As the song says, "You're gonna miss me when I'm gone." **CT**

NOTES

1. Interview with Dan Johnson, 24 January 2014.
2. David Conn, 'Hillsborough and Battle of Orgreave: one police force, two disgraces', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2012.
3. For my personal recollections of the events at Saltley Gate see 'Forty Years After: What's In A Name?': <http://www.saltleygate.co.uk>
4. *The Economist*, 'The town without news' 23 July 2009; Red Pepper, 'An industry gutting itself', Feb/Mar 2014; *Press Gazette*, 5 February 2014.
5. www.nuj.org.uk/documents/bbc-cuts-there-is-an-alternative

WATCH THE MOVIE:

Watch the Inside Out programme at: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xukkmm_orgreave-bbc-battle-for-orgreave_news

SETTLING SCORES

THE MEDIA, THE POLICE AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

edited by *Granville Williams*

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom for the 30th anniversary of the 1984-85 UK miners' strike *Settling Scores* pinpoints unfinished business from the miners' strike, and the search for truth and justice for miners, their families and the hard-pressed coalfield communities.

Nick Jones reveals what he found in the government Cabinet papers released on 3 January 2014; Tony Harcup uses Freedom of Information to find out how the BBC got it so wrong in its reporting of the Battle of Orgreave on 18 June 1984; Ray Riley, a former miner, analyses the source of the savage police tactics deployed against the miners at Orgreave.

Buy the book online from www.cpbf.org.uk

UK £8.50 Europe €13 USA \$18 CAN \$20 (All prices inc p&p)



23 Orford Road Walthamstow London E17 9NL
Telephone 0772 984 6146 email: freepress@cpbf.org.uk

WRITING WORTH READING

ISRAEL GIVES JEWS A BAD NAME | DANNY SCHECHTER
BERLIN WALL AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES | RAY McGOVERN
THE REAL SHAME OF AMERICAN CULTURE | STACEY WARDE

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 89

BESIDE THE SEA

BLACKPOOL, ENGLAND. A dirty great whirl of debauchery, leers, leers, laughter, vomit, furry handcuffs, fancy dress and drunken oblivion. Marauding packs of brides and grooms, on a mission to consume dangerous, liver-crushing levels of alcohol

— 8-Pages of photographs from a new book by Dougie Wallace



PLUS GEORGE MONBIOT • PEPE ESCOBAR • MARK METCALF • WILLIAM BLUM • RICHARD PHOENIX • NATE ROBERT • AHRON BREGMAN • SHIR HEVER • JP SOTTILE • LINH DINH

CANADA'S HEART OF DARKNESS | JIM MILES
THE MYSTERY OF MY ARREST | RAY McGOVERN
TOO MANY PRYING EYES | BILL BUCHANAN

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 97

RUSSELL BRAND, REVOLUTION AND THE MEDIA
"TODAY HUMANITY
FACES A STARK
CHOICE: SAVE THE
PLANET AND DITCH
CAPITALISM
— OR SAVE
CAPITALISM
AND DITCH
THE PLANET"



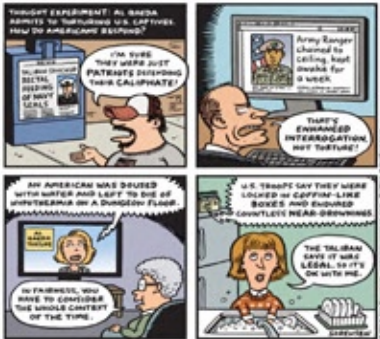
WHOSE FREEDOM? THE ATTACK ON CHARLIE HEBDO
CRITICAL ESSAYS BY DAVID EDWARDS, CHRIS HEDGES, RICK
SALUTIN, JONATHAN COOK, LARRY CHIN, TREVOR GRUNDY

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 93

WHEN IS TORTURE TORTURE?



THE WAR ON CYBER-ACTIVISTS | NICOLE COLSON
THE PRESIDENT'S NEW JACKET | CHELLIS GLENDINNING
INSIDE THE SAUSAGE FACTORY | BOB CORRIGAN

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 94

MALCOLM X
WAS RIGHT



CHRIS HEDGES tells how America's refusal to face the truth about empire has created the nightmare Malcolm X predicted 50 years ago

ColdType

Get your FREE subscription at
<http://coldtype.net/reader.html>