

# Books



Photo: Richard Masoner / flickr CC.

Press corruption is, sadly, a subject we're now familiar with, from the press's own coverage of the Leveson Inquiry and, more recently, the trial of Rebekah Brooks, Andy Coulson and others who – in what might become the longest criminal trial in English history – are charged with phone hacking at the now-defunct *News of the World* tabloid. It would be nice to think that this is an unfortunate blip in an otherwise sparkling British press history. Certainly, I hadn't take much notice of the inquiry or court case until I'd started to read Patrick Chalmers' book, when some familiar words started to nag at me.

'Don't believe all you read in the papers' is a common enough phrase, but how much do we really understand about the accuracy of what we are told – and not told – in the press, whether in newspapers, on the radio and television, or, more recently, on news websites? Certainly, I was happy to dismiss much of what I read in the tabloid press, but I didn't over question what the major television channels said and, as a TV licence payer, I was, by and large, happy with the non-commercial BBC.

## Blowing the whistle

Patrick Chalmers' book *Fraudcast News: How Bad Journalism Supports Our Bogus Democracies* has pulled me up with a start. In some ways the book has made me feel a fool for being so gullible, and yet it has also confirmed, with explanations, what I've always guessed was probably the case – that we're told a version of the truth that suits the media's paymasters. In reality, has it ever been anything different?

Blowing the whistle on a skewed press would be a good subject for a book. The author's skill, in this case, is in the way he has woven that awakening with another important subject: that of showing how fundamentally flawed are the so-called democracies we live in and how the mainstream press has no motivation to highlight, to us, their biased and manipulative nature. I am ready to read, watch and listen with new eyes and ears.

I first came across Patrick Chalmers' writing through his *Fox Report* articles in *the Friend* last year. He 'spoke to my condition'. His main interest is in democracy, social justice and political governance at both local and global levels and in how – by being well and accurately informed – we can influence the way our world is run. This book follows his journey from naive enthusiasm as a novice journalist to, after twenty-five years, the sad realisation that news organisations are not really interested in accurate political reporting. The book 'summarises contemporary governance failures and how journalists must do – and can do – a far better job in bringing them to public light'.

## Reuters

Based on his globetrotting life story, which includes an episode of sleeping on bare floors in abandoned offices to 'get the story', Patrick Chalmers gives us, in the book, his path to political consciousness, and encourages us to follow our own paths to awareness. Starting as an engineering graduate, he tried on repeated occasions to get his dream job at the British news agency Reuters and succeeded on his fourth attempt. He believed that Reuters would give him the opportunity to travel,