

Street OF Shame

“WHO is Milo Yiannopoulos, the ultra-conservative ‘provocateur’ and Donald Trump fan who has resigned from Breitbart News over paedophilia comments?” the *Telegraph* asked two weeks ago.

A good question – but not one the newspaper or its website was prepared to answer fully following his *dégringolade*. In a potted biography of Yiannopoulos it chose to omit his years of employment as a technology blogger at, er, the *Telegraph*.

In those days executives were in awe of him. As former comment editor Iain Martin recalled on the *Reaction* website last week: “He was parachuted in to meetings with the company’s leaders where he mapped out his vision of a *Telegraph* at the forefront of a millennial media revolution.”

No wonder the *Telegraph* chooses not to tell its readers about this embarrassing infatuation, or its unhappy end. In 2009 Yiannopoulos set up the Wrong Agency Ltd to run the “*Telegraph* Tech Start-Up 100” awards – but failed to sign up enough sponsors, leading to a loss on the venture of more than £50,000. He parted ways with the *Telegraph* and dissolved his company two years later, when newspaper execs vetoed a decision to give the top award to Wonga because they didn’t want to be associated with a payday loans company. Little did they imagine that an association with Milo would ultimately prove even more shaming.

AFTER a pay freeze lasting nine years, *Express* proprietor Richard Desmond has finally capitulated, offering staff a mighty 2 percent pay increase. The thaw came about after NUJ reps took their dispute to the government’s central arbitration committee.

Express hacks were delighted by the outcome but also a little sceptical of its timing. It comes as Desmond is deep in talks with David “Rommel” Montgomery, who is raising money from private investors in the hope of buying *Express Newspapers* and making a comeback as a newspaper proprietor. So not great timing for a public slanging match over pay between Desmond and the NUJ. And, if the takeover happens, it will be Montgomery who picks up the bill for Desmond’s last-minute act of generosity.

Maggie Lunn 1961-2017

“THE brilliant casting director and human Maggie Lunn has died,” the actor/director Samuel West tweeted two weeks ago. “She cast four plays I directed, impeccably.” Paul Miller, artistic director of the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond, described her as “a great, funny, challenging, inspiring, incredibly gifted person”.

Maggie is also remembered fondly at the *Eye*, where she worked in the 1980s before moving into theatre and TV. She was popular, bright, funny, mischievous and a great asset to the magazine.

Her talent for drama was put to excellent use one evening in December 1986, when, as she later proudly used to recall, she joined Peter Cook’s legendary raiding party on Robert Maxwell’s office in the *Mirror* building (for a full account, see Adam Macqueen’s book *Private Eye: the First 50 Years* or listen to episode 22 of the *Eye*’s podcast *Page 94*).

RIP, Maggie.

THREE years ago, when the *Daily Telegraph* still had some pretensions to being a newspaper, its diarist Tim Walker revealed that a PR company had told hacks that attendance at the Brit Awards was conditional on them plugging Mastercard, the main sponsor, on their own social media as well as in their newspapers.

House PR had even provided a *pro forma* tweet all hacks had to put out about “how excited” they were to be travelling to the ceremony, naming the sponsor and using its “approved hashtags”.

Jon Snow of *Channel 4 News* declared that no journalist worthy of the name should ever put up with such “Soviet-style” news management. But staff on the *Sun* – the official media partner for the Mastercard Brits that year – had to suffer these humiliations and more, printing vast supplements embellished with corporate guff and trademarks. The *Telegraph* diarist had much sport mocking the *Sun* for its obedience.

Fast forward to the Mastercard Brit Awards 2017. On the day of the event, 22 February, the company’s latest Fleet Street media partner duly had a front-page puff, plus four pages inside – lavishly emblazoned with the Mastercard logo – that kicked off with its chief music critic saying how excitedly he was “looking forward to tonight’s glittering ceremony”. This newspaper is... the *Daily Telegraph*.

With an average age of 62 (and rising), the paper’s readers have a limited appetite for guff about “how this year’s Brits will be the edgiest ever”, but who cares about them? For this promotional piffle masquerading as news, Mastercard paid the *Telegraph* £150,000.



“Honestly, Chicken Licken, you need to stop taking these fake news sites so seriously”

“AMAZON Prime and other subscription services that sign up customers to pay after a free trial are to face curbs in the budget,” the *Times* revealed on 4 March, choosing to focus general measures being considered by the chancellor specifically on one company, which happens to be one of the biggest rivals to its sister TV service, Sky TV.

“Amazon Prime faced criticism for the practice last year. It was led by the *Times* columnist Giles Coren and resulted in the service being described as ‘Amazon Crime’ on social media.”

The practice is also astonishingly similar to one the, er, *Times* used to tempt people to sign up to its website when it went behind a paywall in summer 2010.

Customers who signed up for access to the site for 30 days for £1 discovered in the small print that they were actually signing up to a rolling subscription which would automatically take £9 a month from them as soon as the period ended. And anyone signing up to the 14-day free trial of the paper’s Kindle edition will still find themselves automatically billed thereafter – with charges made to the default credit or debit card they have registered with, er, Amazon!

WHITE ELEPHANT NEWS

NOW that the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) has decided that the press regulator which meets the requirements of the royal charter is both the only one that actually applied and the one that has only garnered the support of such media titans as *Shetland News* and the *Ramsey and Warboys Reporter* (*Eyes passim*), is it strolling off into the sunset, declaring its work here is done?

Far from it. The PRP was set up by the government in 2014, not long after David Cameron’s “bonfire of the quangos”, and was given £3m of public money. It is due to make its first review of regulator Impress to check it “continues to meet the charter requirements” in the autumn of 2019, and to do so again every three years after that, although it can also perform “ad hoc reviews if we think that there are exceptional circumstances that make it necessary to do so”. It also has to “report to parliament, the Scottish parliament and the public on how the recognition system is working”.

And it still has plenty of cash to do so – it expects, at the end of this month, to carry reserves of £1,199,665 through to the next financial year. The funding by government is supposed to stop in November, but it is now permitted to charge Impress for its reviews, which will give it access to some of that lovely dosh Max Mosley has shoved at arm’s length in its direction. So the watchdog that watches the watchdog that watches the dogs that don’t bark (so far, no one appears to have made a single complaint about any of Impress’s 33 regulated publications) is expected to be in business for quite some time.

And it is certainly keeping busy. Last month it launched another public consultation, this one on “amendments to our guidance for reviewing approved regulators”. Anyone with a burning opinion on the question “Do you agree that the PRP needs discretion to decide whether to seek third-party information in order to assist its assessment of a regulator’s variation to the way they comply with the recognition criteria?”, or indeed how they might best use a “risk matrix approach” to do so, should rush to have their say.

THE ink was barely dry in the last *Eye* when *Times* diarist and political sketch-writer Patrick Kidd used his column on 23 February to attack the ever-rotating shadow cabinet.

“Andy Warhol was almost right,” he snorted. “‘In the future,’ the pop artist said in 1968, ‘everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes.’ For ‘be world-famous’ read ‘sit in the shadow cabinet’.”

Eye reader David Campbell was among those who had read the original joke on page 28 of *Eye* 1438, which featured “Updated Andy Warhol Quotes” with mock pop-art portraits of former frontbenchers above the quote: “In the future, everyone will be a member of Jeremy Corbyn’s shadow cabinet for 15 minutes.”

As someone clearly interested in culture, no doubt Kidd is familiar with another of Warhol’s quips: “Art is what you can get away with.”

THE THINGS THEY SAY ...

“The only positive remark I have ever heard about growing old was from the jazzman, George Melly. ‘The consolation is losing your libido. It’s like being unchained from a lunatic.’ He got the libido perfectly.” – *Jeremy Paxman, Financial Times, 27 May 2016*