

# Dispatch

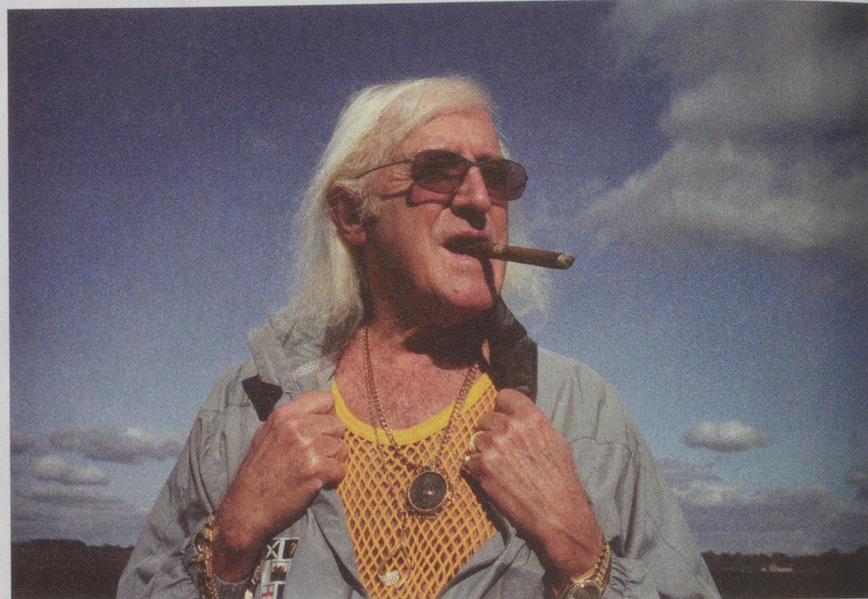
## Violation of Trust A sex scandal at the BBC tarnishes the broadcaster

By Catherine Mayer/London

BRITAIN BOASTS A STORIED HISTORY OF investigative reporting and, in the BBC, a public broadcaster that has served as a role model for many imitators overseas. Yet something strange is happening to the nation's media. Last year's revelations of phone hacking by or on behalf of Rupert Murdoch's Sunday tabloid *News of the World* launched a cascading series of inquiries by different authorities. The institutions Britons relied on to keep one another on the straight and narrow—Parliament, the police, the press—were all implicated. Only the BBC—dear old Auntie Beeb—retained public trust. But since early October she has been engulfed in a scandal darker and more sordid than anything Murdoch's hackers dredged up, and the media—the BBC very much included—dine on little else.

TV host Jimmy Savile, dead since last October, is back on British screens, wagging a big cigar and mouthing his uncanny catchphrase, "Now then, now then." If the BBC's most enduring popular image is that of a maiden aunt, Savile was its wacky bachelor uncle from the late 1960s until the end, some three decades later, of his near continuous employment on light-entertainment programs. He seemed the ideal presenter to front shows aimed at kids: a bit zany, a tad countercultural, but absolutely safe. Parents entrusted their children to his care when he presented the music program *Top of the Pops* or made wishes come true for lucky young viewers who wrote to his show *Jim'll Fix It* to beg his help. Outside the studio he burnished his reputation with charity work, earning knighthoods from the Queen and the Pope. When he died last year at 84, the BBC's website eulogized his benevolence but struck an odd note: "Some questioned the motivation of the man behind such a singular public persona."

A huge problem for the BBC now is



**Uncle Jim** During his long career, TV host Jimmy Savile personified the BBC

that some did indeed question Savile's motivation. For years there were rumors within the media that the children's-show host was a pedophile. His nickname among BBC insiders was Jim'll F--- It. Yet still the plaudits piled up. Even worse for the BBC—and especially for its current and recent top managers, including Mark Thompson, former BBC director general and incoming CEO of the New York Times Co.—the broadcaster's flagship news program, *Newsnight*, returned to those questions after Savile's death, but its investigation was shelved, and the BBC's two tributes to Savile aired as part of its heartwarming Christmas fare.

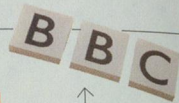
The police and judiciary have begun to review evidence, some of which they had apparently ignored or overlooked, suggesting Savile was an insatiable sex offender who allegedly used his fame and philanthropy to gain access to his

**For years there were rumors within the media that Savile was a pedophile**

victims. For its part, the BBC has already set up several inquiries. These will not delve into the failures of the police but instead focus on the BBC's own deficient handling of Savile before and after his death and wider allegations of sexual harassment by other staff members that have come in the wake of the scandal.

Some key players are giving their side of the story. Thompson, who navigated smaller storms at the BBC during his eight years at the helm, issued a statement: "I was not notified or briefed about the *Newsnight* investigation, nor was I involved in any way in the decision not to complete and air the investigation." His successor, George Entwistle, who took over in September, gave a halting performance during an Oct. 23 grilling by a parliamentary committee. BBC staffers who were gathered in Westminster for a book party on the evening of Entwistle's testimony talked of little else. "Entwistle will be the shortest-lived director general in the BBC's history" was one pithy assessment.

If true, that would be bad news for Entwistle and for anyone who relies on Britain's media for information. Savile should have been investigated. With the BBC and other media outlets fixating on themselves, what else will go undetected?



**State-funded**  
British households with TVs pay a compulsory \$233 fee each year to support the BBC.

# Nation

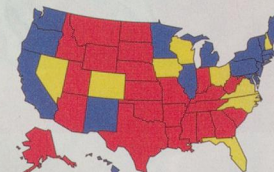
## Between the Lines

By Mark Halperin

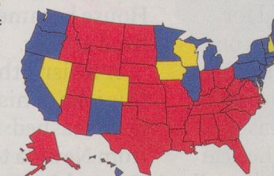
▶ After the three presidential debates, Mitt Romney has closed the gap with Barack Obama and has his best chance yet to win. But barring a hidden anti-Obama sentiment that neither the White House nor many public pollsters are picking up, the President retains a crucial advantage he's enjoyed all along—more and easier routes to the 270 electoral votes required to win.

Here's where the two sides now stand: Obama is counting on 237 electoral votes, and Romney has 191, with 110 up for grabs.

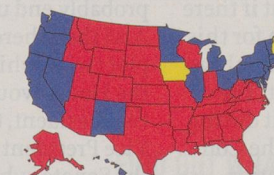
▶ That means Romney needs 79 electoral votes from the remaining nine toss-up states



▶ Judging from his current standing, his most likely paths involve winning the three Southern battlegrounds and the ultimate prize, Ohio. That would leave Romney at 266 and needing to win only one of the five remaining states in play, with Colorado the most likely



▶ If Romney can sweep the South but can't overcome his long-standing deficit in Ohio, his task becomes much harder. The most likely combo without the Buckeye State: Colorado, Paul Ryan's home state of Wisconsin and either Iowa or New Hampshire



▶ The major complications for the Republican: Obama won all nine of these states in 2008, and the incumbent is fiercely contesting all of them this time around



**FINAL COUNTDOWN** Romney campaign staffer Charlie Pearce moves a corn-hole game from the tarmac in Daytona Beach, Fla. The homestretch of the campaign will require a near continuous loop among the swing states to try to keep the momentum going right to Election Day.

### On the Ballot in ...

Americans won't just choose the next President and Congress on Nov. 6. Ballot measures nationwide are asking voters to weigh in on a range of controversial topics, including marijuana regulations, abortion, gay marriage and even hunting rights. Here's a look at three of the most hotly disputed issues at the state level:



**CALIFORNIA**  
The death penalty may be repealed and replaced with life in prison without parole—saving \$130 million a year, supporters argue



**FLORIDA**  
A constitutional amendment to restrict abortion would ban taxpayer-funded abortions and clear the way for new parental-consent requirements



**MARYLAND**  
The state's recent Dream Act, which allows in-state college tuition for certain qualifying illegal immigrants, could be overturned



### WORD OF THE WEEK

**mi·cro·po·li·tan**  
adj. small but regionally important population center of 10,000 to 50,000 residents

See: The U.S. Census Bureau found that 1 in 10 people lives in one of the country's 576 micropolitan areas, such as Hilton Head, S.C., and Wooster, Ohio

**\$10,445**

The current average price per acre of high-quality cropland in Iowa—a record—due to high corn and soybean prices