

'Fantastic' media debate at the Temple of Peace

By William Hayward

Cardiff's Temple of Peace played host to four leading journalists in a debate on the media's coverage of global news. The 'Small World' debate, co-hosted by the Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA) and Cardiff University's School of Journalism (JOMEC), included a panel of both print and broadcast journalists.

Lindsey Hilsum, International Editor for Channel 4 News and Jonathan Levy, Director of News-gathering and Operations at Sky News represented broadcast, while for print there was Sean Ryan, Associate Editor at the Sunday Times and Martin Shipton, Chief Reporter at Media Wales.

The event was chaired by former Director of the BBC World Service Richard Sambrook who is now Director of the Centre of Journalism at Cardiff School of Journalism.

Deputy Chief Executive, Susie Ventris-Field, said: "The debate could not have been more topical. Set against the backdrop of a refugee crisis and a parliamentary debate on bombing Syria it was sure to evoke some challenging and emotive questions."

All the panellists got about 10 minutes to speak before they heard questions from the audience. Jonathan Levy spoke about how people related to people from different cultures and countries more than ever before.

Lindsey Hilsum talked about how the media "set the climate" for discussions on international affairs but are not a warning service. She also spoke about the challenges of reporting in war zones. "Sometimes I feel bad for not having been traumatised."

Martin Shipton added a Welsh perspective and talked

about Wales' close ties to Lestotho. Sean Ryan spoke about the news gathering process. He said: "A good foreign correspondent doesn't decide the story in advance."

The floor was then opened up for questions. These swung from specific questions on the minutiae of journalistic process to sweeping condemnations of the entire industry.

The audience took advantage of a having such an experienced panel by posing questions on the media's perceived lack of coverage of climate issues and misrepresentations of the Islamic community.

Speaking afterwards Richard Sambrook said: "The theme was particularly topical as Westminster debated whether to bomb Syria, the ongoing refugee crisis and with global leaders gathered in Paris to discuss climate change. How the media reports such issues shapes our view of the world – and in an inter-connected, inter-dependent world that's more important than ever.

"There was a large audience all engaged with international issues and interested in how the media reports them – the discussion was open and frank which I think was appreciated by everyone.

"We were lucky to get such a strong panel of internationally experienced journalists to share their views – and sometimes to offer some challenge back to the audience!"

Joe Smith, 26, a journalism student at Cardiff University attended the event. He said: "It was a fantastic night and really inspiring to see some masters of the craft speak about industry in a very personal way. Really enjoyed it and even better than that, it is free."

When asked why she was involved in the event Lindsey Hilsum said: "Because I think it's important that people understand how journalism works in the real world.

"I find that non-journalists and academics who have never been journalists often theorise with no understanding of the day to day pressures of time, money, visas, logistics and all the ordinary constraints of our lives."

