

AUTHORITY OF EDITORS

"The power of the proprietor is exercised properly by the appointment and dismissal of the editor, not by interfering with his work or doing it himself".

- The Geoffrey Dawson Memorandum on the Authority of the Editor, November 18, 1922, which was accepted by the owners and has been the practice since.

The pledges given to the Monopolies Commission 1966, by the editor-in-chief on behalf of Lord Thomson should be reaffirmed. In particular, paras 88 and 179 describe acceptable relationships between editor and proprietor (for editor-in-chief here read, in future, proprietor).

"It was not intended that the office of editor-in-chief should infringe in any way either the independent responsibilities of the two editors for editorial opinion or their direct authority over their editorial staff. In particular Mr. Hamilton informed us that, although in the natural course of things the editor of either paper might consult him on particular matters of public policy, it would in each instance be for the editor himself to determine the attitude of the paper, and that if there should be disagreement between editor and editor-in-chief it was intended that the final decision on all such matters should rest solely with the editor. Mr. Hamilton undertook that this would be made quite clear to each editor on appointment and that the editor's independent authority would remain plain to all senior staff members."

H.E.

2.

Para 84

"Each of the two editors would make his own decisions on matters of opinion in leading articles; each would be free to disagree with the other and each newspaper would continue to take separately its own lines of policy.

"The role of the editor-in-chief, in the words of Baggeot, would be 'to advise, encourage and perhaps warn them.'"

The tradition and therefore the requirement in future is that the editor should have complete and final control of (i) his staff and all editorial appointments; (ii) complete and final authority on the selection and balance of news; (iii) the right to refuse to publish an advertisement; (iv) complete and final authority on the political policy of the newspaper. The owner would not seek to impose a new editor-in-chief.

INDEPENDENCE OF TITLES

Para 105 of the Monopolies Commission Report should be reaffirmed:

"We have taken independence to mean not merely freedom from proprietorial interference in editorial policy, but freedom from subservience to a political party and freedom from commercial pressure whether exerted by advertisers (by the withdrawal or threat of withdrawal of advertisements) or by the proprietors to protect their commercial activities outside the newspaper industry."

To this, in the present case, should be added:

"or interests in newspapers outside Times Newspapers."

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Relations with General Manager or Chief Executive

In the tradition of Times Newspapers and of sound administration, the proprietor should acknowledge :

1. The complete equality of status, in their respective spheres, of the chief managing executive of the newspaper(s) on the one hand and of the editor on the other.
2. That Management has no authority to make editorial representations to the editor, or to the owner or to anyone else.
3. That in matters affecting them both the editor and chief managing officer should have equal access to the proprietor - i.e. quotas, editorial budgets, accommodation etc. should be fully discussed with the owner before a decision is made

H.E.

January 21st, 1981

REQUIRED PLEDGES

Appointment and Dismissal of Editor.

I propose that: Article 107 (b) of Times Newspapers Ltd. Articles of Association should be amended, on sale, to read as follows:

No person shall be appointed to the office of Editor of The Times or Editor of The Sunday Times without the prior consent of all (for discussion: a majority) of the independent directors of the Company nor shall any persons so appointed be removed from office without such consent.

Note:

The reference to the independent directors here is an addition to Article 11(a) of TNHL which should be amended accordingly.

2. The Disposal Articles (Articles 88 in TNL and 89 in TNHL) should stand.

3. The sanction of the independent directors in these matters should be enshrined in the ownership of a special class of shares which alone should have voting rights on these issues. The power to vary the rights of these shares should be vested only in an Annual General Meeting of the shareholders of that class of shares, i.e. the independent National Directors themselves.

4. Irrespective of these powers of the National Directors the proprietor binds himself to preserve the separate identities of The Times and Sunday Times and to maintain the independence of their editors in the appointment of staff, the selection and balance of news, and the political policy of the separate papers.

These assurances should be lodged with the Board of Trade. They should be written and made public and they should also be contained in the Contract of Sale.

Note of National Directors:

The National Directors should be self-perpetuating. Each should serve for three years and a maximum of five years. The proprietor should have the right to veto up to three names in any three year period. One national director should be drawn from the staff and/or a distinguished outside newspaperman.

Note on Staff:

There should be some agreed method of consultation with staff - not an election but an opportunity for a filter of staff views.

(This page should be read in reference to a more detailed discussion of the authority of editors which follows).