

TIMES NEWSPAPERS HOLDINGS LIMITED

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THE FUTURE OF TIMES NEWSPAPERS

UNDERTAKINGS BY MR. RUPERT MURDOCH

SIR DENIS HAMILTON, CHAIRMAN AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF TIMES NEWSPAPERS HOLDINGS LIMITED, READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 1981 AT THE PORTMAN HOTEL, PORTMAN SQUARE, W.1.

A series of specific formal undertakings were given last night by Mr. Rupert Murdoch to, and were approved by, the Editorial Vetting Committee of Times Newspapers, chaired by Sir Denis Hamilton and comprising the Independent National Directors (Lords Roll, Dacre and Greere) and the Editor of The Times, Mr. William Rees-Mogg, and the Editor of The Sunday Times, Mr. Harold Evans. Lord Robens was abroad but has been fully informed, and has agreed.

These undertakings, concerned with protecting the editorial quality and integrity of The Times, The Sunday Times and The Times Supplements and their future ownership, will be incorporated in Articles of Association and, additionally, deposited with the Secretary of State for Trade. The principal undertakings are:-

1. Independent National Directors

The system of Independent National Directors serving on the Board of Times Newspapers Holdings Limited will be preserved and enhanced. There will be an increase in the number of Independent National Directors. They will be required to approve subsequent appointments to their membership.

2. Appointment and dismissal of Editors

The Editors, to be appointed by the Board, may be appointed or removed only by the agreement of a majority of the Independent National Directors. The Independent National Directors will be available for arbitration on unresolved issues.

3. Disposition of titles

Any future sale of any of the titles will require the agreement of a majority of the Independent National Directors.

4. Maintenance of Editorial Independence

Irrespective of these rights of the Independent National Directors, Mr. Murdoch undertook to bind himself to preserve the separate identities of The Times and The Sunday Times, and to maintain the independence and authority of their Editors in the appointment and control of their staff; over the political policy of the separate newspapers; and in all respects to maintain the titles as editorially independent newspapers of high quality. Each of the two Editors would be free to make his own decision on matters of opinion and news and each would be free to disagree with the other and with any other newspaper in which Mr. Murdoch may have an interest.

In particular Mr. Murdoch subscribes to and undertakes to observe the following principles relating to editorial integrity.

- (a) The Times and The Sunday Times are free from party political bias and from attachment to any sectional interest. They will be subject to no restraint or inhibition either in expressing opinion or in reporting news that might directly or indirectly conflict with the commercial interests or political concerns of the Proprietor. The Times is recognised to be a paper of record.

- (b) In accordance with the traditions of the papers, their Editors will not be subject to instruction from either the Proprietor or the Management on the selection and balance of news and opinion. They have the right to refuse to publish any advertisement.
- (c) Instructions are to be given to journalists only by their Editor and by those to whom he has delegated authority.
- (d) The Editors of each of the Supplements should have the same responsibilities and prerogatives in relation to their paper as the Editors of The Times and The Sunday Times.
- (e) The Board of Times Newspapers Ltd. is to be responsible, after consultation with the Editors, for fixing an annual budget for editorial space and expenditure. The Editors are to be responsible for the allocation of space between editorial and advertising day by day, within the strategic framework set by the Board.

The Editors will continue to make all appointments to the journalistic staff, subject to the constraints of the editorial budget.

NOTE:

The Articles of Association of Times Newspapers Holdings Limited and Times Newspapers Limited will be altered as appropriate to reflect the above undertakings in the event that the sale to Mr. Murdoch becomes unconditional.