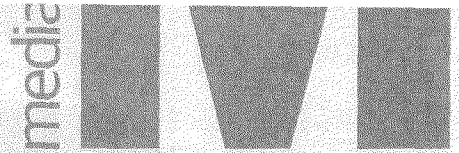


THESE ARE LONG-TERM economic cycles
 Claire Enders, page 5



the guardian Monday 10.08.09

Watching the watchdog

Its critics call it toothless and ineffective, and call for stronger regulation of newspapers - the PCC's new chairman, Peta Buscombe, has got battles ahead. The Tory peer speaks for the first time to James Robinson

The Press Complaints Commission seems engaged in an endless battle to convince its critics that the publishing industry is capable of regulating itself, and that the PCC is not a toothless watchdog rendered supine by the way it is funded. The commission's new chairman, Lady Buscombe, already finds herself embroiled in it.

She is determined to ensure that the threat of external regulation remains a distant one, says the Conservative peer and barrister, despite recent headlines about alleged malpractice on Fleet Street. "We have to assure all parts of the political spectrum that we are responsible enough and confident enough to be left alone," she says. She almost winces when she uses the phrase "self-regulation", preferring to talk about "independent press regulation" instead.

Buscombe took over as PCC chairman in April from Sir Christopher Meyer, a former ambassador to the US who fought the fight with aggression and flair. The new chairman has kept her counsel since arriving at the regulator, despite a high-profile clash last month between the Guardian and the News of the World over allegations of phone-hacking, which reignited a debate about journalistic ethics. It was seized on by opponents of self-regulation - although the Guardian argued that the issue was not self-regulation itself, but effective self-regulation - and also prompted the PCC to reopen an earlier investigation into accusations of malpractice at the Sunday title.

Following the evidence

Buscombe confirms it will report back in the autumn. "We are going where the evidence takes us," she says. "We have asked various organisations to give us information." They include officials at the Information Commission, which has an extensive list of journalists from a range of titles it claims have engaged in phone-hacking.

"It looks as though there is no evidence of this [phone-hacking] in 2007 [when News of the World royals reporter Clive Goodman was jailed for intercepting phone messages]," Buscombe says. That could be because newspaper groups cleaned up their acts following Goodman's conviction. The more pressing question for the investigation is whether News International executives were being completely sincere when they said Goodman was acting alone.

The PCC was criticised for failing to grill Andy Coulson following his resignation



Press baroness ... new PCC chair Lady Buscombe will fight to retain the commission's independence Photograph: Graham Turner

as editor of the News of the World when Goodman was jailed. Coulson insisted he knew nothing about the methods his reporter was using. The primary aim of the PCC's current investigation is to discover if the commission was misled by the executives who did give evidence.

Buscombe has inherited this thorny problem, but she is forthright in her defence of the way the PCC has dealt with it. "The PCC was incredibly proactive in its response," she insists, referring to the fact that its code of conduct was changed.

"We are taking this very seriously. People have said to me 'did you do enough to investigate?' Even if we were a state regulator there would be a limit to what we can do." Other authorities with investigatory powers, including the police, were also examining the case, she points out. The PCC - which is essentially an ombudsman handling complaints - stretched its remit as far as it could by opening its own inquiry.

Buscombe cannot be expected to pre-judge the results of the PCC's investigation, but few observers expect it to censure the News of the World. If they are right, she may have to contend with another verbal assault from PCC critics.

She appeared to acknowledge some of their concerns - about effective self-regulation, and the possibility of government oversight - when she announced a review of the commission last week. One of the questions the review will ask is whether "We are at sufficient arm's length from the industry in order to do our job."

Collision course

Issues of transparency will also be examined, perhaps providing succour to critics who regard the setup as too cosy - with adjudications reached behind closed doors and senior figures effectively appointed by the Press Standards Board of Finance, which is funded by the industry and provides the PCC with its annual budget of £1.9m.

The aim of the review is to strengthen the PCC and head off the threat of external regulation or privacy legislation - two perennial threats mooted by politicians, which could gain credence following the rough treatment many MPs believe they received during the expenses scandal. "We have to guard against a kneejerk response from a group of people who do feel aggrieved by what's happened," she says.

She will also launch two further consultations in the autumn, one of which will be on the issue of industry "convergence" and its implications for the PCC's remit. That could set the commission on a collision course with Ofcom over which body regulates the video and audio content on newspaper websites.

The Sun's SunTalk radio show, anchored by John Gaunt, for example, is regulated by the PCC - when Buscombe visited its offices earlier this year Gaunt mistook her for wildlife presenter Kate Humble - but there are some who believe it would be more logical for Ofcom to regulate such content.

"There will be pressure, I fear,"

'I know Ofcom won't like me saying this, but Ofcom is not independent of government'

Net profits

Murdoch wants users to pay for content. What could he learn from the music, games and video industries?

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Loss leader

Steve Hewlett: ITV's results were bad - but not too bad. Long-term, things are not looking so rosy

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Adjust your set

Broadcasters claim they are working to make television and radio as diverse as their audience. But are they?

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Thursday Consumer magazine figures for first half of 2009 published
 Friday National newspaper ABCs for July released

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Twittered during the trial - a quick search on Twitter for "jury service" will show you just how many people are willing to share. One tweeted, hopefully in jest: "Is it innocent until proven guilty, or guilty until proven innocent?"

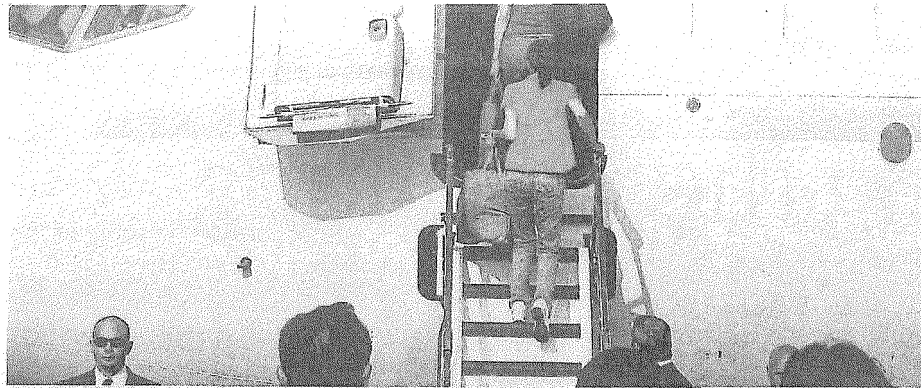
Informing followers that you are on jury duty may not, in itself, cause injustice. But discussing the trial may. In Arkansas a construction company is filing for a mistrial based on a juror's tweets, which, it says, show he was biased against it and playing to his "audience" when he and fellow jurors awarded a \$12.6m verdict against the company in March. A juror's postings to Twitter and Facebook have prompted similar calls concerning the trial of ex-Pennsylvania state senator Vincent Fumo, charged with \$3.5m fraud.

But if jurors' tweets are causing a problem in the US, what's happening in the UK? The answer is: we don't know. And we cannot even ask. It would be contempt of court to ask a juror if tweeting to their followers in the jury room had influenced their deliberations.

Guidance issued to UK jurors says they will be allowed to bring mobiles and laptops with them, but "probably" will not be allowed to have them in court or the retiring room. This has not stopped UK jurors in the past from downloading material to inform their deliberations in a sexual offence trial. On one occasion, a juror was dismissed from a sexual assault and abduction trial at Burnley crown court after posting details of the case on Facebook and asking for her friends' opinions on it.

There is no reason to be complacent about the potential Twitter has to cause miscarriages of justice - enlightening high information gleaned from it may be as grossly prejudicial. In 1981, when the Contempt of Court Act came into force, there were three TV channels, print media and no internet. Perhaps it is time for research into jury decisions and the effect that a multiplicity of media may be having on them.

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Flying visit ... Bill Clinton greeting Laura Ling and Euna Lee in Pyongyang Photograph: Xinhua/Reuters

Journalism

Reporters matter - if they're western

The release last week of the investigative journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, following the intervention of Bill Clinton in North Korea, seemed to be the ultimate good news story. But it also raised questions about investigative journalism - and the manner in which Ling and Lee were freed.

I met Ling when she was nominated for an Emmy for her report From Russia With Hate, and I was working as a journalist for Current TV's UK channel. She heads the Vanguard journalism department at the organisation, producing investigative reports on a shoestring budget for the channel, which is owned by Al Gore, and has travelled to some of the world's most notorious danger zones, infiltrating drug gangs in Brazil and visiting slums in Haiti. Such frontline journalism

Quote of the week

I am exactly the same height as Napoleon. Five foot six and a half

Sir Martin Sorrell



Helen Croydon

is becoming less common in TV newsrooms, which increasingly appear to rely on newswire footage for international reports and rarely diverge from the main stories of the day. There is also the problem of resources - as a small channel, Current cannot afford the protection that larger outfits give their investigative teams.

Before Clinton stepped into the negotiation, there was little coverage of Ling and Lee's detention. And when he did, the pair's release provided a photo opportunity that benefited Kim Jong-Il. Captured western journalists, it seems, can be a valuable PR tool for hostile regimes.

"There's a clear indication that the pair were political pawns," says Tala Dowlatshahi, a senior adviser to Reporters Without Borders. "South Korean journalists get arrested on that border all the time. Elsewhere in the world, Iranian and Iraqi journalists are detained and tortured on a daily basis, yet British and US journalists get the most attention because of the value they have on the global media stage."

of this year have increased a bit for commercial TV - the trade research claims we are now watching nearly 17 hours a week and the average person views 43 TV ads a day. All of them are being whizzed on personal video recorders; number of ads watched at home was also up 2% on the same period last year, Thinkbox said.

Given that we are watching ads, you'd think advertisers would be trying to ensure that their ads stand out. Instead, we are seeing a proliferation of poor-quality or nondescript commercials - and not just from local advertisers. As budget restrictions bite, some big brands have also resorted to bland or poor advertising - with being a good example. Sales at that local marketing department have been forced to buy in pan-Europe which have to work in many languages and therefore rarely engage us as we age to find a humorous tone. I doubtless do little to shift mo-

Ad agencies talk about being disciplined, but they still have great TV campaigns. It is what they do - and their clients - famous so without a huge budget, how to be tricky. The key is to find new ways of supporting the campaign. TVCCP's ads for Comparethemarket have been so successful. The ads, featuring Russian meerkat called Aleksa, ingeniously engage with consumers, backed by a relatively cheap social media campaign.

The Comparethemarket ads do not have worked without teletext as the main medium - but good are not just about getting noticed. The Cillit Bang ads, for example, but that doesn't mean you need engagement with the brand. They're conscious connections that the reviewer. It is surprising that so many advertisers still fail to grasp that box says commercial TV is defined by the audience: it is a shame that advertisers are not always delivering the commercials viewers deserve. Money would go a lot further if

Lucy Barrett is editor of Market

Watching the watchdog

for a quick-fix solution," Buscombe says. Some politicians will ask "wouldn't it be easier to bring everything under Ofcom?" But that is something she is determined to resist. "Self-regulation for a converged industry has to be the way forward," she argues. "I know Ofcom won't like me saying this but Ofcom is not independent of government." Broadcasters already seek advice from the PCC, rather than Ofcom, she notes, particularly on issues such as "doorstepping". Clearly she is not afraid to step on some toes.

The second consultation will examine the impact of free newspapers funded by local councils, and ask whether the PCC should also regulate the taxpayer-funded sheets. Buscombe's view is that such titles are undermining regional newspapers at a time when they already face unprecedented financial pressures.

She has spent the first four months in the post travelling the country and canvassing opinion. She has been talking to newspaper and magazine publishers and to others who use the PCC, or deal regularly with the media, including the police, the NHS, charities who work with victims of crime, and even the press team at Coronation Street - who felt that "the press generally have become more responsible".

So why do the number of complaints to the PCC about breaches of its code of practice keep rising - from 900 in 2004 to 1,420 last year? Partly, Buscombe says, because "it is so easy to complain now" and partly because the PCC is more visible

than it used to be. Celebrities "who could well afford to go to their lawyers" now beat a path to its door on a weekly basis, she points out. It's a practice she is keen to encourage. "If you think something is going to be published that is inaccurate, get on the phone."

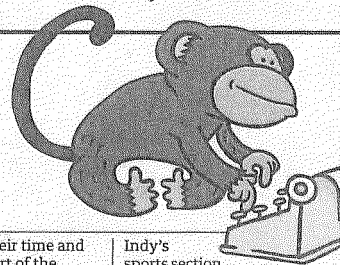
The PCC sent out dozens of "desist notices" - around 80 - last year at the behest of readers, and editors are also consulting the PCC more often for "pre-publication advice," she claims. "There have been some amazing stories and pictures that haven't been published because the editors have got in touch and ... we have said 'we can't tell you what to do' but we would advise against [publishing]."

A famous TV star is currently battling a serious illness and the PCC brokered an agreement to ensure it is not reported. This "collaborative" approach serves all parties well, she argues. The PCC has five full-time complaints officers and she contends the public is happy with the service. (According to a 2008 customer satisfaction survey by the PCC, 81% of respondents felt their complaint was dealt with thoroughly or very thoroughly.)

Buscombe also reveals that Express Newspapers' proprietor, Richard Desmond - who in effect pulled his papers out of the PCC following a dispute with the Newspaper Publishers Association, one of PressBof's, main beneficiaries - is now "back on board". Given that while the dispute was ongoing, the Commission had to deal with complaints about Express stories even though its owner had stopped contributing to its costs, that is good news for the PCC.

But the dispute illustrates the difficulty of keeping the PCC's members - fierce commercial competitors - happy. The real battle is likely to centre on the age-old debate about whether newspapers can be relied on to police themselves. Desmond's return to the fold has resolved one headache - but there will be plenty to come.

Media Monkey's Diary



The BBC suffered a blow on the release of the quarterly Rajar radio listening figures last week. Corporation bosses decided they would no longer publish audience numbers for individual programmes outside of the network breakfast shows, figures the BBC has been releasing since Monkey's records began. Something to do with it being paid-for "subscriber data", apparently, so hacks would no longer be told how many people listen to, say, Jonathan Ross or The Archers. The BBC eventually relented at the 11th hour - and was rewarded with a story about Ross on the front page of the Daily Mail - but it remains to be seen what it does when the next figures are published in three months' time.

Opinion poll of the week award goes to the Economist's big-thinking quarterly, Intelligent Life. "Most important year poll: the invention of the printing press pips Jesus's birth." Intelligent life, intelligent polls.

Telegraph hacks have been casting envious glances towards colleagues competing in the Great North and Great South Runs as part of "Team Telegraph" later this year. Ordinarily, the prospect of running 23 miles in the two races is not the sort of thing to turn a scribe green with envy. But Monkey hears journo writing about their (near) marathon efforts for the paper and its website are being royally rewarded for their efforts. "Those members of the team who are journalists and who'll be writing about their experiences during build-up, training and the actual race,

will be remunerated for their time and professional services as part of the commercial deal with [race sponsor] Bupa," says a Telegraph spokeswoman. "The other Telegraph team members who are running it but not writing about it will not receive a payment, whether they are from the commercial or editorial side of the business." For them the satisfaction of taking part will just have to do.

Along with children's TV presenter, Capital Radio DJ and BBC 5 Live talkshow host, Richard Bacon will soon be able to add another occupation to his CV: stand-up comic. The 5 Live man is in training to hit the stage with his own stand-up routine at this month's Edinburgh festival. Monkey hears he is being lined up for a "real bear pit" of a club, with the results to be broadcast on his late-night 5 Live show. So hecklers will be able to make their voice heard on 5 Live without even picking up the phone. Canned laughter not included, obviously.

Federica Pellegrini was the undoubted galactica of the World Swimming Championships ... She won two golds and broke two world records to add to the eight she holds already, and she has only just turned 2," enthused Independent editor Roger Alton in his Spectorator sports column. "What a gal, and not only that, but she lives her life on the front pages, is blessed with movie-star looks, has modelled nude for Vanity Fair (natch), and been involved in what we tabloid journo call a poolside love triangle." Yet she failed to make a splash with the

Indy's sports section, which didn't run a single photo

Monkey's believe it or award: "Friends Reunited" one of the great undersung TV events. It's one of the most important bits of ITV going forward, a must-see, and it's profitable." February 2007. "We're going to it, that's the first thing ... It's a profitable business, it keeps growing. It's in the sweet spot of the we not a fashion item that is going overtake." Michael Grade on Reunited, February 2008. And August 2009: ITV sells Friends for £25m, £150m less than it paid

Red faces at Thomson Reuters, where the new information group's journalist: their own company's results have run two corrections. First they stock market ticker wrong, the incorrectly used millions rather than billions when describing revenue division. Apart from that ...

Subliminal marketing of the week: "I am a girl the Dave television channel will course the home of witty banter something I enjoy." A caller to Campbell's BBC Radio 5 Live programme in a debate about, er, row behaviour at cricket matches.

You can catch up with Monkey day at guardian.co.uk/media, Twitter: @mgmediamonkey

We have to guard against a kneejerk response from a group of people who do feel aggrieved by what's happened