

The Right Hon The Lord Hunt of Wirral M.B.E.



House of Lords
Westminster
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Monday 26th November 2012

Dear Lord Justice Leveson

There have been inaccurate reports in recent days seeking to contradict the evidence I gave you that all national publishers are willing to sign up to a contract based regulator. May I please therefore send you the attached statements confirming the position. I do not propose to make these statements publicly available before you publish on Thursday and am very happy should you wish to do so. As the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport asked me about the speculation, I have sent the enclosed to her and to Lord Black.

I am writing to you separately about Thursday's arrangements but would like to thank you for all your hard work and courtesies you have always offered me throughout your unenviable task. Yours ever
David

Submission to Lord Justice Leveson

We, the undersigned, declare that we are willing to place our publications in a new contract-based system of regulation of newspapers, magazines and internet news providers.

We are confident it will address the criticisms made at the Inquiry, and put the interests of the public at the centre of everything it does. It is the only proposal that has been laid out in detail to the Inquiry and subjected to forensic examination. It will be a complete break with the past. It will be fit for a digital age.

It will be underpinned by binding, rolling five-year contracts. It will have serious sanctions – including the power to fine – and powers to investigate wrongdoing and call editors to account. It will be independent, both of the newspaper and magazine industry and also of politicians; and in guaranteeing that independence it will ensure it is fair to all involved. It will involve no cost, either to members of the public or to the taxpayer, and impose the least possible burden on an industry confronting unprecedented financial pressure.

We will oppose any system of regulation imposed on our publications by politicians through an Act of Parliament. Such an Act would inevitably constrain our journalists in their first duty, which is to hold politicians and those in power to account, and restrict the freedom of expression that is the inalienable human right of every citizen. The state would have to fine or close down any publication, from national newspaper to internet blogger, that refused to comply. It would be licensing by another name.

We would welcome legislation that would enable the cheap and speedy resolution of defamation cases without recourse to the courts, an initiative that would bring great benefit to the public as well as to our publications. It would supply the 'carrot' to balance the 'stick' of binding contracts to hold the new system together.

As Lord Chief Justice Judge said, quoting John Wilkes: 'the liberty of the press is the birthright of every Briton, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country'. The only way that liberty can be preserved is by regulation that is itself, genuinely, free and independent both of the industry it regulates, and of political control.

Further Submission to Lord Justice Leveson

We wanted to update you on talks among newspaper groups in recent weeks. We await with real interest your report and in particular your recommendations for improved regulation.

The Inquiry has queried the degree to which all newspaper groups agree on the use of a contract model to secure full industry participation. We can now confirm that all of us endorse a contract model as opposed to the use of statute to compel participation which we see as a form of licensing.

As such all of us as signed below commit to signing contracts to join a regulatory system. We have not wanted to pre-empt the Inquiry by signing a contract before you report but we stand ready to update and finalise the contract proposed by Lord Black once we have seen your recommendations and can make improvements accordingly, in coordination with the party leaders.

SIGNED BY

Lionel Barber, Editor, Financial Times

Evgeny Lebedev, Chairman, Independent Print Limited and Evening Standard Limited

Alan Rusbridger, Editor, The Guardian

THE 
INDEPENDENT

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FROM THE OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

23rd November 2012

Lord Justice Leveson
The Leveson Inquiry
Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London
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Dear Lord Justice Leveson,

We wanted to update you on talks among newspaper groups in recent weeks. We await with real interest your report and in particular your recommendations for improved regulation.

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Your sincerely

Evgeny