



fighting for media freedom

Addendum to SoE evidence to the Leveson Inquiry:
01.02.12

The Society of Editors has more than 400 members in national, regional and local newspapers, broadcasting, digital media, media law and journalism education. It is the only organisation representing editors and senior executives in all sectors of the media. It was founded in 1999 as the result of a merger of the Guild of Editors and the Association of British Editors. It campaigns on press freedom issues, the public's right to know, freedom of expression and media standards.

Generally it believes that there should be no special privileges for the media nor should there be any special laws to restrict it. Freedom of the press is based on the fundamental human right to freedom of expression. That said, changes in the law and other regulatory pressures such as data protection changes emerging from Europe have meant that the media has sought safeguards in the form of public interest defences and now there is a strong case for special mention of the freedom of the media within the law to provide extra safeguards for the important role that it plays in any democratic society. The society is funded by individual memberships, sponsorship of events and through the industry's main journalism awards programmes which it organises.

Contrary to the impression that may have been created by some evidence to the inquiry, editors and the industry are not cavalier about privacy and other important issues that affect the public. Above all, newspapers have absolutely no interest in offending "ordinary" people. The opposite is the case - these same people are readers and potential readers, and it would quickly prove ruinous to alienate them.

Editors and the industry support the Society of Editors and its work on media freedom issues and especially the promotion of high standards of journalism. This work includes the printing and distribution of a wallet-size version of the code that is sent to all editors with the idea that all journalists can carry it with them at all times. The society works with training organisations such as the National Council for the Training of Journalists which has provided a submission to the inquiry itself.

The society organises conferences, seminars and debates and liaises with many other organisations including the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary and the courts, the Director of Public Prosecutions and CPS, the police, charities and interest groups.

It has worked with government departments including the Ministry of Defence and intelligence and security services. It is represented on and works closely with the DA-Notice Committee, it facilitated the understanding between the Army and the media that allowed Prince Harry to serve in Afghanistan without his presence in a war zone being reported. It arranged events for the heads of the Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service to speak to editors publicly. It played a central role in the Cabinet Office's Media Emergencies Forum.

It has produced reporting guidelines for journalists either itself or it has endorsed the work of other organisations. These have included such areas as court reporting, race and faith issues, following the September 11 attacks in New York, the reporting of poverty, mental health, asylum and immigration. It

works with Samaritans and others on the reporting of suicide and played an important role in encouraging organisations and politicians to work with the PCC.

The behaviour of newspapers has changed dramatically as a result of the work of the Press Complaints Commission and the application of the Editors' Code which has clearly been dynamic and responsive to changing public attitudes and circumstances. The society has no formal role within the PCC system or Pressbof. It is an independent and critical friend. Its members serve on the PCC and Code Committee as individuals or as representatives of other newspaper organisations. The role of the PCC pre-publication should not be underestimated. Editors of national newspapers have suggested that we should not count the number of potentially intrusive stories that they do publish but look at the numbers that are not carried as a result of pre-publication advice from the PCC. Considering the debate about whether the PCC is or is not a regulator, many editors would feel that it has the affect of a regulator as a result of its adjudications and discussions with complaints' officers about complaints that are ultimately settled satisfactorily. The Editors Code also has a regulatory effect.

The Society of Editors organises the Press Awards for UK national newspapers and has revived the Regional Press Awards for local and regional newspapers. Entries to these awards display and encourage the highest standards of journalism that is clearly in the public interest. If politicians and the public could see the range and quality of the work judges have to read there would be an entirely different perception of the standards and importance of UK journalism.

The society has provided video recordings of the key sessions of its 2011 annual conference that were devoted to those issues at the heart of the inquiry in which a wide range of speakers from within and without the newspaper industry took part. The society would be able to provide access to entries for the press awards programmes so that the inquiry could sample the full range of high quality journalism that is evident in all types of newspapers across the UK.

Bob Satchwell -

Executive director of the Society of Editors since its foundation in 1999. He was the award-winning editor of the *Cambridge Evening News* from 1984 to 1998. He was President of the Guild of Editors from 1997-98, which became the Society of Editors in 1999.

He was previously chairman of the Guild of Editors' Parliamentary and Legal Committee. He was also a member of the Editors' Code Committee.

He is a member of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee, the Cabinet Office Media Emergencies Forum. He brokered the understanding between the media and the Chief of the General Staff that led to the news embargo during Prince Harry's deployment to Afghanistan. He was a member of the Ministry of Justice Information Users' Group, the Home Office Community Cohesion Media Practitioner Group, the Queen's Jubilee Communications Committee and the Home Office advisory committee for the review of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. He was a member of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Public Interest in Poverty Issues Advisory Board.

He is chairman of the judges for the British Press Awards and the Northern Ireland Press and Broadcasting Awards, organiser of the Regional Press Awards, a trustee of the CPU Media Trust and a director of the London Press Club.

He is an Associate Press Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is a non executive director of the National Council for the Training of Journalists and a member of the Newspaper Qualifications Council. He was an external examiner at the London College of Communications and at the Department of Journalism, University of Central Lancashire. He is a member of the print industry advisory panel at the School of Journalism, University of Lincoln.

He started his career with the *Lancashire Evening Post* in 1970 where he rose from graduate trainee to associate editor. He was Journalist of the Year in the British Press Awards for 1977 and Crime Reporter of the Year in the same year. He went to Fleet Street as assistant editor of the *News of the World* before returning to regional newspapers as editor of the *Cambridge Evening News* in 1984. He was included in the Press Gazette Regional Newspapers 40 years Hall of Fame in 2006.

During his tenure the *Cambridge Evening News* was one of the most successful regional newspapers in Britain. It was Press Gazette Newspaper of the Year in its category for 1993 and Daily Newspaper of the Year in the BT Awards for the London and Home Counties North region for 1994. It won Newspaper Society prizes for best circulation increases in 1993, 1995, and 1996. It was also named Community Newspaper of the Year for 1996. He retired from the editorship at the end of 1998 after nearly 15 years. Satchwell, 63, who is married with two daughters and two stepsons, was educated at Lancaster Royal Grammar School (president of the Old Lancastrian Club 2004-2005) and the London School of Economics.

Bob Satchwell
Executive director
Society of Editors

