



Further evidence to The Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practice & ethics of the press from The British Press Photographers' Association

INTRODUCTION

In an email on the 11th of January 2012 from the Leveson Inquiry Solicitors Team, The BPPA was asked for further information regarding a single point made in our full submission of the 6th of January. The purpose of this further evidence statement is to formalise the response that we gave following that request.

RESPONSE

In the introduction to our main submission we said the following:

“The BPPA can speak for press photographers who, because of the highly fragmented nature of our employment, may well speak to the BPPA when they would not speak to the Inquiry.”

This is a very sensitive area. There are many occasions when a photographer may wish to act ethically, but in an industry where almost all photographers are now employed on a casual day-to-day basis it would be very difficult to refuse to take a picture - or to be out-done by other photographers willing to take it - for fear of losing future work.

Few photographers have contracts of employment, and so have no employment rights. Remaining in work and paying the bills puts massive pressure on photographers to do as picture desks tell them.

An example of this would be the coverage of The Leveson Inquiry itself. Before the first witness arrived, there was a great deal of discussion between photographers and officials about how

such a delicate story should be covered. Professional photographers have acted well outside the court.

Problems arose on the day JK Rowling gave evidence, when she left through a side door rather than the exit used by most witnesses. There was more discussion between photographers about whether she should be photographed as a legitimate subject of a news story, or be allowed to leave without being photographed.

Several photographers were ordered by their papers to get a picture of her even if that meant suspending the agreement about only working from within the barriers. Others felt enormous pressure without hearing from their editors.

Things became yet more difficult when television crews filmed Ms Rowling's departure.

Pictures taken in such situations against the better judgment of photographers often to go unused. Having the material in-hand, even if it remains unpublished, seems to be a goal of many newspapers.