

B Labrum
13 December 2011
1st

IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF BILLY LABRUM

I, **BILLY LABRUM**, Journalist, of The Northern and Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6EN, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. I am the Picture Editor of The Daily Star Sunday. I make this statement in response to a request of the Leveson Inquiry (the "Inquiry") to the solicitors for Northern & Shell dated 1 December 2011 to provide witnesses who might attest to the circumstances pictures used in newspapers might be bought or obtained.
- B. I confirm that all matters in this statement are true and, unless I specify to the contrary, are based upon my own knowledge and a review of the relevant documents. Where matters are not within my own knowledge, I state the source and believe the same to be true.
- C. For convenience, I have reproduced as subheadings the questions asked of me in the 1 December letter.

Please provide a brief description of your career history to date

1. I have worked in picture publishing since I left school at 16. I began my career working for picture libraries, and up until 6 years ago I worked for magazines as a freelance photographer. I began working at The Daily Star Sunday as the Deputy Picture Editor in 2005, before being made the Picture Editor 2 years ago.

How are the photographs which appear in your newspaper obtained? The Inquiry assumes that some are bought from paparazzi or other freelance photographers, and others are taken by staff photographers. Are there any other sources of photographs?

2. Photographs are sourced from agencies and freelance photographers, as The Daily Star Sunday does not employ staff photographers. We very rarely use for example the Daily Star's photographers, as to some extent we are competing newspapers. We also sometimes use pictures submitted by members of the public.

Please provide a copy of any code of practice or manual which regulates the activity of your employed photographers. What sanctions are imposed if your photographers fail to act in accordance with that code? How many times have you imposed sanctions on your employed photographers over the last four years? Please give specific examples. If there is no code, then please explain how photographers are given guidance as to which photographs it is appropriate to take?

3. As above, The Daily Star Sunday does not employ any photographers.

How do you ensure that photographs taken by your employed photographers have not been taken in a private context, or taken in a situation that has caused distress or fear to the subject of the photograph? How often do you refuse to publish a photograph on the grounds that it was taken in a context of harassment, or without regard to privacy?

4. As above.

To what extent do you, or can you, regulate the conduct of agency photographers?

5. Of course it is very difficult, if not impossible, to regulate the conduct of an agency. However I am very careful about which photographers and agencies to use; I only use photographers who I am sure conduct themselves properly.

and, most importantly, do not harass people. I am also able to instruct photographers about the approach that should be taken.

How do you ensure that photographs taken by agency photographers have not been taken in a private context, or taken in a situation that has caused distress or fear to the subject of the photograph?

6. It is admittedly difficult to be sure that photographs have not been taken in a private context due to our relying on outside sources for our pictures. However I make sure to find out what I can about the context in which photographs have been taken by asking what relevant questions can be asked.

What sanctions are you able to impose against photo agencies or individual photographers if you discover that photographs have been taken in an unacceptable context?

7. I'm afraid that is simply not something that is possible to do. We do not blacklist an agency, and indeed I have never felt the need to. I have never in my experience known a situation where someone has done something by nefarious means.

What measures are taken to ensure that any photo provided to your newspaper by an employed photographer or otherwise has not been digitally altered?

8. As an experienced photographer and picture editor I am able to quite quickly spot faked, or altered photographs. There are certain checks you can do if you are suspicious. However we have never altered a photograph during my tenure at this newspaper.

Did your newspaper instruct any photographer, employed or otherwise, to follow or take photographs of the mother of Hugh Grant's baby (Tingfang Hong) before or after the birth of her child?

9. We did instruct a photographer to take photographs of Ms Hong, however I feel that that was justified. This was a big story; Mr Grant is for the British public the epitome of the eternal bachelor. And, of course, in order to get a

photograph, you need to have a photographer there. However, I did not ask the photographer to follow Ms Hong; he was instructed not to get in her way, and certainly not to act in any way that might cause her to feel harassed.

Was an employed photographer from your newspaper present outside the home of the mother of Hugh Grant's baby in the first two weeks of November 2011?

10. Yes.

Were you offered pictures of the mother of Hugh Grant by any agency or individual photographer? Were any pictures purchased?

11. Yes, however we did not purchase any such photos.

Has your newspaper published any photographs of the mother of Hugh Grant's baby?

12. No. The only photographs which we obtained were of the mother only and there was no interest in that.

Did your newspaper instruct any photographer, employed or otherwise, to follow or take photos of Kate McCann on her return from Portugal in September 2007? Did your newspaper publish any photos of Kate McCann taken in this period? If so, did the picture editor inquire into the context in which the photos were taken? If so, what in your view justified the publication of these photos?

13. I was not the picture editor at the time so I cannot comment specifically, however photographs were taken and published. I do believe that the publication of such photographs were justified, in that it was an incredibly important story to the British public. To tell the story it was necessary to obtain new and up to date photos.

Has your newspaper ever published photographs of the children of JK Rowling? If so, what is the justification for such publication?

14. No.

Did your newspaper ever instruct a photographer, employed or otherwise, to take photos up the skirt of Charlotte Church? Has your newspaper ever published photos taken up the skirt of Charlotte Church, or up the skirt of any other individual? What is the justification for such publication?

15. No. There is no reason why The Daily Star Sunday would feel the need to publish photos taken deliberately in this vein. Photos of celebrities where the wind has taken their skirt for example have been used in the past, but I believe such "Marilyn Monroe" type photos are taken and used in jest, and the publication of such photos is certainly not a new phenomenon.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.

BILLY LABRUM

Dated: 13 December 2011