

Statement to the Leveson Inquiry by Rt Hon. Norman Lamb MP

Re: Leveson Inquiry – culture, practice and ethics of the press

1. My name is Norman Lamb. I am Member of Parliament for North Norfolk having first been elected in 2001. I am currently Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Business Innovation and Skills. I was appointed to this position on 3rd February, 2012. Prior to that I was an Assistant Government Whip and Chief Parliamentary and Political Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister.
2. In that role I had regular meetings with journalists and other representatives of news organisations. The News Corporation executive Fred Michel asked to meet with me twice during 2010. I agreed to meet him in Portcullis House at Westminster on each occasion.
3. Having checked my diary, I can confirm that the meetings took place on Thursday 10th June and Wednesday 27th October. At that time, Vince Cable, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills had ultimate responsibility for deciding whether to make a referral of the proposed takeover of BSkyB to the Office of Fair Trading.
4. On both occasions we discussed a range of subjects including the proposed takeover of BSkyB. This was raised by Mr Michel. I listened to the points he made and did not volunteer any information. I was acutely aware that the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills had to exercise a quasi-judicial duty. I was also not party to any information or decisions surrounding the takeover.
5. During the second of these meetings – on 27th October, 2010 - Mr Michel again raised with me the position with regard to the proposed takeover of BSkyB. He argued strongly, on the basis of the legal position, that there were no grounds for a referral. During the discussion he raised the issue of News International newspaper coverage given to the Liberal Democrats. He said he felt that the coverage since the

election had been very fair. He specifically mentioned The Sun and indicated that it had given the Liberal Democrats reasonable coverage since the general election.

6. He then implied that if the decision surrounding the bid did not fall in their favour, it would be a pity if things were to change and they were no longer able to report in such a positive way. I cannot remember the exact phraseology used but the message was very clear. I chose not to respond. I took the view that this was part of the lobbying operation in the run up to a decision on the bid.
7. I was very concerned by what I heard and reported it to Nick Clegg and also to Vince Cable.
8. We were all very clear that nothing of this sort should influence in any way how the bid was considered.

I believe the facts stated in this statement are true.

Signed:

Norman Lamb MP

Dated:

20/6/12

END