

Conclusions on the public interest

5.1 We are required to report whether the transfer to the ultimate control of the trustees of Lord Iliffe's 1969 Settlement of the newspapers named in the reference may be expected to operate against the public interest, taking into account all matters which appear in the circumstances to be relevant and, in particular, the need for accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion.

Changes in the running of the newspaper businesses

5.2 It is clear, from what we were told about the way in which the newspaper businesses are run, that Mr Iliffe is able to take decisions, or influence the taking of decisions, in whatever way or to whatever extent he chooses, whether those decisions affect the BPM newspapers (other than those published by North Wales Newspapers Ltd) or the Coventry newspapers, or both of them. It is also clear that the newspapers (other than those published by North Wales Newspapers Ltd) are for practical purposes controlled as one enterprise by Mr Iliffe through the various boards and the editors. We are satisfied that the proposed transfer if allowed would in practice make no difference to the running of all of these newspaper businesses, or to Mr Iliffe's own involvement in them.

Accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion

5.3 We are specifically required under section 59(3) of the Act to take into account the need for accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion. The present arrangements, stemming from the definitions of responsibilities of the editors by Mr Iliffe himself, give the editors of the various newspapers the freedom which they need to present the news accurately and to express opinions freely. Mr Iliffe has assured us that these arrangements would remain unchanged and we have no reason to doubt that that would be so. We heard of no criticism of any of the Iliffe newspapers in these matters.

5.4 We are therefore satisfied that there is no objection to the transfer on the ground of any adverse effect on accurate presentation of news or free expression of opinion.

Competition

5.5 Competition between the Iliffe newspapers exists only in the Birmingham and Coventry areas and there only to a very small extent. We see no reason for thinking that the transfer would affect such competition.

5.6 So far as competition with other newspapers is concerned, we are satisfied that the transfer would not lead to a reduction in competition because the way in which the newspapers are run would not change. Any financial

improvement as indicated in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 might lead to an increased ability on the part of the newspapers to compete with other newspapers.

Employment

5.7 We are satisfied that the transfer would not affect the levels of employment in these newspaper businesses. The potential financial improvement mentioned in the preceding paragraph could provide some additional safeguard for employment.

Concentration of ownership

5.8 While technically there would be a concentration of the ownership of newspapers in the hands of the trustees, we are satisfied that for the reasons stated this would produce no prejudicial results.

Conclusion

5.9 We conclude that the transfer of the newspapers of which Mr R P R Iliffe is proprietor to the ultimate control of the trustees of Lord Iliffe's 1969 Settlement may not be expected to operate against the public interest.

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19 April 1985