

THE TIMES

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From The Editor

19 January 2012

Dear Lord Justice Leveson,

After I left the Inquiry on Tuesday, I was concerned about two details of my testimony.

When asked whether I had attended any meetings with politicians with either Rupert or James Murdoch, I forgot that, in 2008, James Murdoch attended Labour party conference in Manchester and joined a dinner of half a dozen Times journalists and the then Chancellor, Alistair Darling. I was also present at two meetings last year when Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, came to discuss the possibility of News Corporation establishing an Academy school. When asked how often I had met the Prime Minister, I thought I was answering about the last year. Looking back, I realise I was being asked how often I had met him since May 2010. I do not have an exact number to give you, but, in nearly two years, it is likely to have been over a dozen times. I realise this is not a comprehensive answer to these questions but if you need more information please let me know.

As you will be aware, in my witness statement to the Leveson Inquiry I raised concerns that I had about an incident of computer hacking at The Times. I was not asked about it when questioned on Tuesday but I felt it was important to address the issue raised by the publication of my statement with our readers. So I draw your attention to an article on page 11 of this morning's paper which seeks to give a more detailed account of what happened.

In June 2009 we published a story in what we strongly believed was the public interest. When the reporter informed his managers that in the course of his investigation he had, on his own initiative, sought unauthorised access to an e-mail account, he was told that if he wanted to pursue the story, he had to use legitimate means to do so. He did, identifying the person at the heart of the story using his own sources and information publicly available on the internet. On that basis, we made the case in the High Court that the newspaper should be allowed to publish in the public interest. After the Judge ruled that we could publish in the public interest, we did. We also addressed the concern that had emerged about the reporter's conduct, namely that he had used a highly intrusive method to seek information without prior approval. He was formally disciplined. The incident has also informed our thinking in putting in place an effective audit trail to ensure that, in the future, we have an adequate system to keep account of how we make sensitive decisions in the newsgathering process. This was an isolated incident and I have no knowledge of anything else like it. If the Inquiry has any further questions about it, I would, of course, be happy to answer them.

Your sincerely

James Harding

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Registered No. 894646 England*

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