

Statement submitted to the Leveson Inquiry by Justin Rigby, January 23rd 2012

By profession, I am a finance specialist. I started writing for the newspapers in the personal finance sections and helping programmes such as *World in Action* and, later, *Tonight With Trevor Macdonald*. I then went to Sheffield University as a mature student to do a Master's in journalism. During my time at Sheffield, I wrote for the Sunday Times. I did numerous undercover stories for them. I also worked for the Sunday Tribune in Dublin. I then joined the BBC for nine months on their investigative programmes for news and current affairs. I then spent approximately 18 months at the News of the World in their investigations department and latterly in their news department. I left to form my own PR company specialising originally in music (artists such as Liberty X, Tom Jones) around 2003.

With regard to my experiences of the practises of the press in obtaining stories, I think realistically there is nothing positive that can be said. I think that the newspapers are commercial enterprises that believe the better the stories they get then the more money the newspaper will receive. I think the illegal practices have been well documented in the inquiry. As for legitimate practises in obtaining a scoop, whether it's PR driven or not, it depends on the relationship that the journalist can develop with their contact. I think you must remember that a lot of stories come from professional tipsters e.g. PRs or freelance journalists etc and quite often it comes down to money.

With regard to the unlawful matters, I think there are four reasons for this - as somebody who came to journalism as a mature student, the corporate failings of the newspapers were obvious from day one:

1. A complete lack of management accountability
2. A fear and bullying culture that would not be acceptable in most other sectors
3. Many companies employ extensive management development programmes. To my knowledge, that isn't the case in newspapers. To put it bluntly, you have to ask whether the people running the newspapers were actually up to the job?
4. Complicity by the rank and file journalists of newspapers. I think many journalists lost their moral compass. They felt the stories on Sienna Miller or Ashley Cole were stories of general public interest and, although many of them never committed illegal acts, I'm sure they would have done if they had been asked to.

With regard to the PCC, we have never used it. We would regard it as a joke and the newspapers regard it as a joke. I think the fact that the PCC were unable to get to the bottom of the hacking enquiry originally just shows the contempt that newspapers genuinely feel for that body. I'm sorry but it's very hard to have confidence in a regulator that has many of the perpetrators sitting in judgement on its own. Ludicrous.

I think the main issue with all this, is privacy. The newspapers are not stupid. If you sue them for breach of privacy then everything is public. The newspapers have worked out that it's too embarrassing for people to take them to court on the whole. So really, despite there being a European law of privacy, they can write whatever they wish. Secondly, it then follows that because people are embarrassed by the stories they are not investigating where the stories have come from, which means basically the newspapers are having their cake and eating it. They have also worked out, in addition, that somebody like Judge Justice Nichol will always find for a newspaper, while Justice Eady normally finds in favour of an individual. I think the British courts will now find themselves bypassed. I think you're going to see a lot more litigation in Europe. As an agency we have already taken measures that will enable our clients to actually sue anywhere but the UK. France is the new England.

I think it's also worth bearing in mind that despite us hearing so much about press freedom, most of the stories are on people's private lives. The News of the World did the Test Match betting scandal, the Telegraph did the MPs expense scandal and the Sunday Times years ago did cash for questions - after that, you're struggling to name stories of actual criminal wrongdoing. I think it's also worth noting that the United States has some of the strictest journalistic standards possible yet it's virtually impossible to sue for libel. It's hard to imagine what the British press would be like if we had American libel laws. Editors of newspapers in America have been known to resign if a journalist has ever made anything up

I confirm that the contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

