

The Leveson Inquiry

Witness Statement of Paul Dacre

1. The purpose of this witness statement is to address the questions put to me by the Inquiry in the S.21(2) Notice dated 29th June 2012.
2. I refer to my witness statement to the Inquiry dated 25 October 2011 which provided the Inquiry with details of my career as a journalist, and my roles as an editor and editor in chief of Associated Newspapers and as an executive director of DMGT. It also provided the Inquiry with a summary of my public roles in relation to the PCC, the Code Committee and PressBof.

Proposal for Self-Regulation, S 21(2) Notice dated 29th June 2012

3. My submission to the Inquiry dated 15 June, provided at the request of the Inquiry, expanded on proposals which I discussed in my evidence to the Inquiry in January this year and in my seminar speech in October last year. I included in my submission my observations on the proposals for a new system of self-regulation made by Lord Hunt of Wirral and by the Industry under the leadership of Lord Black of Brentwood.
4. I am referred by the Inquiry to the following submission of Lord Black in his Third Witness Statement to the Inquiry and I address the Inquiry's questions below:

"Responses to the industry consultation from within an extremely diverse set of businesses have inevitably been varied. Parts of the industry – particularly the regional and periodical press – have been understandably anxious about such substantial change, especially when the current system works well for them (as the Inquiry has heard) and above all for their readers. They have rightly been worried about the potential increase in costs and bureaucracy of a new system. But at the other end of the spectrum, some national publishers have argued for even tougher controls. At the end of the day, therefore, this proposal seeks so far as possible to balance these views. But there is no doubt to me that the vast majority of the industry sees them as credible, likely to prove effective and that they will take part. Northern and Shell has indicated that it is willing to participate, subject to detailed contract terms."

"Question (2) To what extent were you personally involved in drawing up this proposal for a new system of self-regulation based on contractual obligations, as now set out by Lord Black?"

Lord Black, as Chairman of the Press Standards Board of Finance, "PressBof", led the industry consultation on the proposed new system for self-regulation. The concepts behind

the proposals, described by Lord Black in his evidence to the Inquiry, were drawn up by Lord Hunt and then presented to Editors, senior newspaper executives and The Newspaper Society by him at a meeting on 15 December 2011. As Lord Black states in his witness statement to the Inquiry, the concept received universal support from the Industry and its constituent parts.

As Chairman of the Code Committee and as a member of PressBof, and in common with Editors and senior executives of other newspaper groups, I attended Lord Hunt's presentations to the Industry on the proposed scheme and I naturally discussed the proposals with Lord Black and at PressBof meetings at which Lord Hunt was present.

My views are well known. In my contribution to the seminar in October last year and in my evidence to the Inquiry, in particular my submission to the Inquiry for Module 4, I have explained publicly my stance on the issues faced by the Industry, how the issues which have concerned the public and the Industry might be addressed and my response to Lord Hunt's proposals.

5. "Question (3) How far would you personally, in your capacity as editor, expect to be involved in the final decision as to whether your publication signed up to the contractual obligations envisaged by this system? Please explain in full how that decision would be taken.

As Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers Limited, the final decision whether or not to subscribe to a new system of regulation would rest with me, after consultation with the company's senior editors and executives.

6. "Question (4) In so far as you are able to do so, please indicate whether your publication is at present fully ready and committed to enter into these contractual obligations. If it is not at present fully ready and committed, please explain why, and detail any changes that would need to be made to the proposal, any further development to proposal required, or any preparatory steps that would need to be taken at your publication, in order to put it in the position of being fully ready and committed to enter into these obligations. If there are

no circumstances in which it would be prepared to enter into obligations of this nature, please explain why not."

As Editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers I confirm that as a group we support the proposals advanced by Lord Hunt and that we will subscribe to the new system of self-regulation proposed, including the contractual framework which is envisaged. I refer the Inquiry to my submission dated 15 June 2012.

7. "Question (5) What specific differences would membership of a system of the kind set out by Lord Black, underpinned by contractual obligations, make to the culture, practices and ethics of your publication?"

Associated Newspapers have always been full participants in the PCC and this will continue to be the case with the regulatory body which replaces it.

We ensure that any amendments to the Code of Practice and any new Guidance from the PCC is circulated to all of our journalists and that any changes which need to be made to our approach or procedures are implemented immediately. I refer the Inquiry to sections B and D of my first Witness statement dated 25 October 2011.

As the Inquiry will be aware, I have implemented changes to our internal procedures in the past when concerns have been brought to my attention by, for example, the Information Commissioner, and this will continue to be the case.

Our editorial policies remain under constant review. We introduced the Corrections and Clarifications columns in our newspapers last October and they have proved to be a very effective means of improving internal resolution of complaints, which is one of the provisions of the proposals referred to by Lord Black.

Peter Wright's appointment as Editor Emeritus anticipates the introduction of annual audits of Standards and Compliance by a new regulatory body and, of course, it is in line with our own internal risk management and annual audits as a group.

8. "Question 6 Is there any other comment you wish to make on the proposal put forward by Lord Black, or on the proposals put forward by others, that are now published on the Inquiry website?"

My submission to the Inquiry contains my comments on the proposals put forward by Lord Black. The final submissions to the Inquiry by Associated Newspapers will address any further points which we consider will be of assistance to the Inquiry on the proposals put forward by other participants.

Signed:



Dated:

20/07/12