

<p>1 Monday, 28 May 2012</p> <p>2 (10.00 am)</p> <p>3 MR JAY: Sir, the witness today is the Right Honourable</p> <p>4 Tony Blair, please.</p> <p>5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you very much indeed.</p> <p>6 MR ANTHONY CHARLES LYNTON BLAIR (sworn)</p> <p>7 Questions by MR JAY</p> <p>8 MR JAY: Your full name, please, Mr Blair.</p> <p>9 A. Anthony Charles Lynton Blair.</p> <p>10 Q. You've kindly provide us with a witness statement,</p> <p>11 I haven't seen a signed copy but it doesn't matter. Are</p> <p>12 you happy to confirm the truth of your statement to the</p> <p>13 Inquiry?</p> <p>14 A. Absolutely.</p> <p>15 Q. Can I deal with some general matters first?</p> <p>16 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Before you do -- Mr Blair, thank you</p> <p>17 very much for providing the Inquiry with the assistance</p> <p>18 that you have. You comment in your statement that you</p> <p>19 haven't received some papers from the Cabinet Office.</p> <p>20 Have you yet received them? Are you satisfied you have</p> <p>21 what you required?</p> <p>22 A. Yes, I'm satisfied I have what I require now. This was</p> <p>23 mainly to do with lists of meetings with various media</p> <p>24 people and we've got, I think, as full a picture of that</p> <p>25 as we can get.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 outset, sir, if I might, that British journalism at its</p> <p>2 best is the best in the world, the finest in the world.</p> <p>3 It's emulated everywhere. So what I'm talking about as</p> <p>4 "wrong" is a relationship or an interaction that moves</p> <p>5 from being sensible and inevitable to being what I would</p> <p>6 say is unhealthy, as a result, really, of a situation in</p> <p>7 which the power that is entered by a certain part of the</p> <p>8 media and the use of newspapers particularly as</p> <p>9 instruments of political power then creates a situation</p> <p>10 in which that relationship is not merely sensible but</p> <p>11 essential, and where I think that relationship can be,</p> <p>12 and sometimes is, unhealthy. And that's what I mean by</p> <p>13 "wrong".</p> <p>14 So "inevitable" is the close interreaction between</p> <p>15 senior media people and politicians. I think what</p> <p>16 I found uncomfortable and unhealthy was when you were so</p> <p>17 acutely aware of the power that was exercised that you</p> <p>18 then got into a situation where, frankly, it became not</p> <p>19 merely sensible and important but essential and crucial</p> <p>20 to have that interaction.</p> <p>21 Q. The attributes then of a healthy, appropriate</p> <p>22 relationship may be a degree of tension, may be a degree</p> <p>23 of professional distance, but if that relationship</p> <p>24 becomes too close, then it may become, to use your word,</p> <p>25 wrong. Is that a fair summary?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>
<p>1 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you very much.</p> <p>2 A. Thank you.</p> <p>3 MR JAY: First page, please, Mr Blair. We're dealing now</p> <p>4 with general themes. We're working from the pagination</p> <p>5 which the Inquiry has provided, 05572. You say in the</p> <p>6 second paragraph:</p> <p>7 "Disentangling what is inevitable from what is wrong</p> <p>8 is a profound challenge."</p> <p>9 We understand in that sentence the adjective</p> <p>10 "inevitable", but could you elaborate on the "wrong",</p> <p>11 please?</p> <p>12 A. Yes. Look, in the relationship between senior media</p> <p>13 people and senior politicians, that relationship is</p> <p>14 inevitably going to involve a close interaction, and</p> <p>15 I think that has always been the case and it's going to</p> <p>16 go on being the case. And what is more, that</p> <p>17 interaction will always involve a certain tension. The</p> <p>18 politicians want to get the best story they can across,</p> <p>19 the media have to hold the politicians to account, so</p> <p>20 there's an inevitable tension in that relationship. But</p> <p>21 I think if you look back over time, there's nothing</p> <p>22 wrong and it would be strange, frankly, if senior people</p> <p>23 in the media and senior politicians didn't have that</p> <p>24 close interaction.</p> <p>25 What is more, I'd like to make it clear right at the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>	<p>1 A. Yeah, except that I find sometimes, you know, in reading</p> <p>2 about this, that -- the use of the word "close" I am</p> <p>3 ambivalent about. The use of the word "cosy" I think is</p> <p>4 not the correct relationship or description of the</p> <p>5 relationship at all. I think "unhealthy" is a better</p> <p>6 way of putting it, because what it means is that if</p> <p>7 you're a political leader and you have very powerful</p> <p>8 media groups and you fall out with one of those groups,</p> <p>9 the consequence is such that it really means that you</p> <p>10 then are effectively blocked from getting across your</p> <p>11 message. You then have all the things that I outline in</p> <p>12 my statement that happens as a consequence of that.</p> <p>13 The nature of the relationship between the</p> <p>14 politicians and the media and that closeness you</p> <p>15 describe is really derived from that, so what, in</p> <p>16 a sense, happens is not necessarily that you become</p> <p>17 particularly close, but the relationship is one in which</p> <p>18 you feel this -- this pretty intense power and the need</p> <p>19 to try and deal with that. And I'm just being open</p> <p>20 about that and open about the fact, frankly, that</p> <p>21 I decided, as a political leader -- and this was</p> <p>22 a strategic decision -- that I was going to manage that</p> <p>23 and not confront it.</p> <p>24 We can get onto whether that was right or wrong at</p> <p>25 a later stage but that was the decision I took.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

<p>1 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Right or wrong is an interesting 2 question, but much more important, obviously later on we 3 will get onto how it should be fixed, if it needs 4 fixing.</p> <p>5 A. Yes, and I have ideas on that, although I think I'd like 6 also, if I might, at a later stage, to put something 7 actually down in writing. But I found when I was going 8 back and reading the evidence that you've received 9 already, there were things that were occurring to me 10 that shifted my view on certain things, so I'd like to 11 do that in a more considered way.</p> <p>12 But yes, look, I think as a result of what has 13 happened, this is a debate that is now permissible and 14 you have the potential to get a solution. So let's hope 15 we can get one. But I'm just being open with you. That 16 was my decision. You could have decided -- and at some 17 points I thought about it, actually, as to whether you 18 took this on as a major strategic challenge of the 19 government. I decided in the end against it, but ...</p> <p>20 MR JAY: Okay. You say, Mr Blair, that you feel you can now 21 speak with greater frankness, but do you feel you can 22 speak with greater objectivity?</p> <p>23 A. I'm probably the worst person to say whether I'm being 24 objective or not, really. I mean, I hope so. Look, 25 I think -- I mean, what I'm going to try and do is tell</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 5</p>	<p>1 part of the responsibility for the current state of 2 affairs is the development within our political culture 3 of a degree of cynicism and, some would say, 4 a disposition to be malleable with the truth, the 5 consequences of which have been toxic?</p> <p>6 A. I would say our responsibility primarily is not having 7 confronted this issue. Now, I will give my reasons for 8 that, my justification for it. I actually do not think 9 that the way this particular part of the media behaves 10 is a response to the way the government has behaved, and 11 what I would say -- I would actually put that around the 12 other way and say, for example, the fact that we got 13 a fully professional media operation operating really 14 properly, I think, for the first time in the Labour 15 Party's history, was a necessary part of being able to 16 deal with a media that was extremely powerful.</p> <p>17 Q. One can see that in this situation it is virtually 18 impossible to disentangle cause from effect. If you 19 accept the premise, please, for the purpose of argument, 20 at least in relation to the Labour Party, that it had 21 a terrible time in the 1980s, certainly up to 1992 and 22 that election, and that your strategy may have been 23 a reaction to that, but even on that analysis, that 24 reaction created a political culture with, as I've said, 25 a degree of cynicism -- and if you don't like the term</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 7</p>
<p>1 you what I think should be done in this situation, but 2 there are obviously people who would strongly dispute my 3 ability to be objective over it.</p> <p>4 Q. In the fourth paragraph on 05572, you say that your 5 argument would be that the unhealthy nature of this 6 relationship is not the product of an individual but of 7 a culture. It's the draining of a poison from the 8 culture that's the real challenge. That's on the first 9 page.</p> <p>10 A. Yeah.</p> <p>11 Q. Are we clear that you are locating the poison within the 12 culture of the press?</p> <p>13 A. Yeah, in this -- as I say, what I would say is in 14 certain parts of the media, where the line between news 15 and commentary gets blurred -- so those papers who take 16 a particular view on a policy, a party or a person, then 17 that is driven with an aggression -- and, frankly, 18 a prejudice -- that means you cross the line, I think.</p> <p>19 Now, that's what I think is the problem, and that's 20 why, if you like, political leaders like myself have to 21 be in a position where you're managing these major 22 forces within the media because if you fail to manage it 23 and you fall out with them, the consequences, you know, 24 as I will say a bit later, are harsh, let us say.</p> <p>25 Q. Is it not necessary, though, at least to recognise that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 6</p>	<p>1 "a disposition to be malleable with the truth", we can 2 turn it down a bit and say "put the best possible gloss 3 on the truth that one can --"</p> <p>4 A. Yes, this is where I think -- it's almost impossible 5 now, even now, to dispute this issue to do with, let's 6 say, spin, so-called spin, from the last Labour 7 government. I cannot believe we are the first and only 8 government that has ever wanted to put the best possible 9 gloss on what you're doing. I would be surprised if 10 governments hadn't done that throughout the ages.</p> <p>11 That is a completely different thing from saying 12 that you go out to say things that are deliberately 13 untrue or you bully and you harass journalists and so 14 on. I read a lot of things we are supposed to have 15 done. I actually dispute we did those things, very, 16 very strongly. My view is this: I totally understand 17 why there's a kind of symmetry in being able to say, 18 "Oh, well, the government was spinning and so the media 19 had to react to that." In my view -- but you can take 20 a different one -- that's not what happened.</p> <p>21 I mean, the truth is, in 1992, Alastair Campbell 22 wasn't heard of. If you look at the way that election 23 was covered -- and by the time I took over the 24 leadership of the Labour Party, we'd lost four elections 25 in a row. We'd actually never won two consecutive full</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 8</p>

<p>1 elections in our history. The longest we'd ever been in 2 power was six years at one go. 3 So -- I went through that 1992 election. I remember 4 it. It was etched on my memory, and yes, I was 5 absolutely determined that we should not be subject to 6 the same onslaught. 7 Q. We'll come back to that issue. 8 Your "feral beast" speech, Mr Blair, which is 9 12 June 2007, which I think was a few days before your 10 departure from office. We have it in tab 49 of the 11 bundle we've prepared, I think in the second file. 12 A. I think I remember it pretty well, actually. I probably 13 don't need to refer -- 14 Q. A number of points you make here would be obviously as 15 valid now as they were five years ago. On the numbering 16 at the top of the page in this version it's page 2 of 5 17 on the Internet printout. At the top, you say your 18 principal reflection is not about blaming anyone. In 19 the third paragraph, you say: 20 "We paid inordinate attention in the early days of 21 New Labour to courting, assuaging and persuading the 22 media." 23 So you're careful to use the word "courting", we can 24 see that. 25 A. (Nods head)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 9</p>	<p>1 media's doing. The fact is today you have 2 a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week media, you have 3 social media as well as the conventional media. 4 I mean, I remember my first election campaign in 5 1997. You could more or less say, "Right, here's the 6 story of the day." By the time I was fighting my third 7 election campaign, there was a different story in the 8 morning, the noon, in the evening. Watching the most 9 recent election complain here, I'd say the pace was even 10 faster. 11 So there's a quite different rhythm to this today 12 that I think -- personally, my advice to any political 13 leader today would be: you have to have a very, very 14 solid media operation. 15 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: One of the things Mr Campbell said 16 was that the problem may be, at least in part, the 17 consequence of pursuing in government the same approach 18 to the media as had been necessary in opposition. It 19 may not be now to discuss it but I mention it because 20 you were just talking about that period of transition. 21 The question then arises whether there doesn't have 22 to be a different approach that works not merely for 23 government but also for those who aspire to government, 24 because it's very difficult -- or may be difficult -- to 25 adjust the tempo of how you do the business.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 11</p>
<p>1 Q. Then you say: 2 "In our own defence [it's a point you've just made 3 to us], after 18 years of opposition and at times 4 ferocious hostility from parts of the media, it was hard 5 to see any alternative but such an attitude ran the risk 6 of fuelling the trends in communications that I'm about 7 to question." 8 So arguably you're accepting there, without 9 attributing cause and effect, to at least contributing 10 to the overall cultural problem, are you not? 11 A. Yes, I am, and, you know, I chose my words pretty 12 carefully there actually about running the risk. To be 13 honest, I don't actually think that we created this 14 phenomenon. I think we were trying to respond to it. 15 What I do think, you know, to be self-critical about 16 the government in its first stages -- we'd, as I say, 17 been out of power for 18 years. We got into a rhythm 18 which is very much the rhythm of opposition. So we were 19 still, as it were, campaigning, you know, in the first 20 few months, possibly the first year of government, but 21 frankly, after that time, you got into a proper rhythm 22 of government and we had a very strong media operation, 23 it's true, but I would argue then -- in fact, I would 24 argue now -- you've really got to -- and I think 25 that's -- I mean, that's not as a result of anything the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 10</p>	<p>1 A. Yes, I think that's a fair point. I would distinguish, 2 however, between, as it were, how you do your proper 3 media operation and relations and communication and so 4 on and this issue to do with the importance of those key 5 media relationships in circumstances where you are aware 6 of the fact that, you know, support -- the difference 7 between support and lack of support is so profound in 8 terms of the effect on politics, because that's -- you 9 know, from the political leader's point of view, that's 10 the thing that you are aware of. So if you've -- this 11 is not true of all parts of the media, by the way, or 12 all parts of all media groups. There are some papers 13 that, you know, you could fall out with the editor and 14 the proprietor and you'd still get a perfectly fair run 15 of things in the news items. You might have bad 16 editorials, you might have bad comments, but you 17 wouldn't have a problem with the news part of it. 18 But those parts -- and they tend to be very 19 powerful -- where, when you fall out with them, you then 20 get a problem in the whole of the paper, the news as 21 well as the comment, that's when, frankly, those 22 relationships, as I say, move from being sensible to 23 being crucial in a way that's probably not healthy. 24 MR JAY: Another general point you make in this speech, 25 Mr Blair, page 3 of 5, the third and fourth paragraphs,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 12</p>

<p>1 where you deal with the sheer scale, weight and constant 2 hyperactivity of coping with the media, and then you 3 say: 4 "At points, it literally overwhelms. Talk to senior 5 people in virtually any walk of life today [and then you 6 list the categories] ... People don't speak out about it 7 because in the main they're afraid to." 8 Which chimes with what Lord Mandelson said on 9 11 July 2011: "We were cowed." Is it as high as that? 10 A. I think you certainly do fear the power being directed 11 at you. 12 The way I will put this, though, is as follows -- 13 and I studied carefully what Peter said about this, and 14 it comes to this question of priority. My view was 15 this: I, as I say, took a strategic decision that this 16 was not an issue that I was going to take on. Now, the 17 way priority comes into this is as follows: I was trying 18 to do all the things I believed in for the country, for 19 the Labour Party and so on. So, as I say, we'd never 20 won two full terms before. I wanted us to become 21 a party of government, able to compete on equal terms. 22 When I came to office, we had health service waiting 23 lists of 18 months, we had only a handful of inner city 24 schools with decent results, we had rising crime. There 25 were all sorts of things we managed to do in Page 13</p>	<p>1 to have taken it on. So the way I would put this is 2 it's not so much -- I did a lot of things in government 3 that were both unpopular and where I had to have 4 a certain courage in standing up to people, whether you 5 agree with those decisions or not. It's not that, as it 6 were, I was afraid of taking them on, in that sense, but 7 I knew that if I did, you have to be very, very clear 8 about this, and that was the debate I had with Alastair 9 and others within government all the way through. If 10 you take this on, do not think for a single moment you 11 are not in a long, protracted battle that will shove 12 everything else to one side whilst it's going on. 13 Q. You make those points very clear in your statement, 14 particularly paragraph 36, but allied to the point in 15 paragraph 11, you say: 16 "We should be aware that some of the media 17 profoundly disagree that there's a real problem." 18 Do you believe that that's still the case even now, 19 Mr Blair? 20 A. Yes. 21 Q. Are you identifying a section of media -- it may be 22 invidious, perhaps, to start naming papers, unless you 23 wish to, but we're confined to a section, are we? 24 A. Yes, I think we're confined to a section. Look, this is 25 the point. This is why it's very difficult to discuss Page 15</p>
<p>1 government -- bringing those waiting lists down, 2 increasing the number of schools and so on, with good 3 results, and all of that is very positive. We had the 4 minimum wage, civil partnerships, Human Rights Act -- 5 you know, there was a whole set of things we wanted to 6 do. 7 My view, rightly or wrongly, was that if, in those 8 circumstances, I had said, "Right, I've decided what I'm 9 going to do is take on the media and change the law in 10 relation to the media", my view is -- and I think it's 11 still my view, actually -- that you would have had to 12 have clear the decks. This would have been an absolute 13 major confrontation. You would have had virtually every 14 part of the media against you in doing it, and I felt 15 the price you would pay for that would actually push out 16 a lot of the things I cared more about, and although, 17 you know -- I think I say towards the end of my 18 statement: although I think this is an immensely 19 important question, I mean, I don't, in the end -- not 20 for me at any rate, as the Prime Minister, was it more 21 important than the health service or schools or law and 22 order. 23 Now, did I come towards the end of my timed thinking 24 it was more important? Yes, I did. At that point, 25 frankly, it would have been absolutely impossible for me Page 14</p>	<p>1 these issues without, you know, people misunderstanding 2 what you're saying, but I'm not making a token statement 3 when I say British journalism at its best is as good as 4 it is in the world, and I see a lot more of journalism 5 around the world today, you know, and govern(?) more, 6 seen more and so on. I think at their best, the best 7 British newspapers and journalists are as good as 8 anything there is globally. 9 But I think there is a genre -- that's what I'm 10 saying -- of writing that has gone into parts of the 11 media where, because this line between news and comment 12 gets blurred, you know, it stops being journalism. It 13 becomes then an instrument of political power or 14 propaganda. 15 Q. Back to "feral beasts". On page 4 of 5, you make 16 a series of points which you pick up in your witness 17 statement in various ways. The reference to "feral 18 beasts" itself is in the fourth paragraph. You say: 19 "In these modes, it is like a feral beast, just 20 tearing people and reputations to bits." 21 A. Yes. 22 Q. I wanted to ask you more specifically about page 5 of 5 23 and the sixth paragraph down where you deal, with the 24 issue of accountability. 25 "In the absence of an objective yardstick ..." Page 16</p>

<p>1 I'll come to that in a moment. Then you say: 2 "In every other walk of life in our society that 3 exercise power, there are external forms of 4 accountability, not least through the media itself." 5 Which comes back really to a recurring theme which 6 we've heard in this Inquiry. 7 The external form of accountability, what were you 8 thinking of there in terms of either its absence at this 9 time and what would be desirable in terms of any 10 appropriate form? 11 A. What I mean is, what most people feel is if you have 12 a complaint, other than the laws of libel, there's not 13 really a place you can go to in order to complain and 14 get redress, and most people, I think, would say the PCC 15 just does not or hasn't operated in a way that provides 16 that accountability. 17 Look, of course newspapers are, to an extent, 18 accountable through, you know, their readers choosing 19 whether to buy the paper or not. But I mean that's like 20 saying, you know, politicians are accountable because 21 every four or five years you go to the election. The 22 truth is you need a process of accountability that is 23 continuing, and which people -- and which then 24 influences the culture in which you behave. 25 Q. We will, of course, come to that. Page 17</p>	<p>1 had to make, in the course of his speech a reference to 2 the inequities to the government, indeed myself, and 3 it's just interesting that two of the examples he gives 4 are just wrong. But it's how these things become 5 absolutely fixated. 6 One was that I didn't bother with Parliament. The 7 truth is, as an ordinary Member of Parliament, I didn't 8 vote a great deal because we had a huge majority, but in 9 terms of my accountability as Prime Minister, which is 10 really measured by the number of times you go to 11 Parliament and answer questions, I actually made more 12 statements, answered more statements than either of my 13 two predecessors in the proportionate period of time, 14 and I was actually the first prime minister to go to 15 Select Committees. 16 So it was just an example of where something that 17 actually is wrong becomes a fact and even someone like 18 him feels obliged to repeat it, even though actually, on 19 analysis, it's wrong. But anyway, that's probably more 20 information than you need. 21 Q. Some of the reaction to your speech was -- 22 A. Predictable. 23 Q. -- not exactly muted. Can we alight on some of them. 24 The Daily Telegraph wrote on 13 June 2007, under 25 tab 50 -- you're described as a religiose figure. In Page 19</p>
<p>1 You were criticised in relation to this speech in 2 a number of ways, but one of them was picking on the 3 Independent newspaper. I think Mr Paxman said that you 4 attacked the poodle and not the Alsatian. You'll 5 remember that in his MacTaggart lecture. 6 A. I do. 7 Q. That was a bit harsh, wasn't it? Not of Mr Paxman, but 8 your criticism here. 9 A. I know what he means, by the way. 10 The reason I -- just to explain, the reason I used 11 the Independent as the example was because the 12 Independent was begun as a newspaper that was supposed 13 to be absolutely against this blurring of news and 14 views, and the reason I use that is I think the then 15 editor of the Independent had just given an interview in 16 which he said, "We are a viewspaper, not a newspaper", 17 and so I was demonstrating that that is, as it were, 18 indicative of how this culture has changed. But the 19 point that I could have talked about the Mail, the Sun, 20 et cetera is perfectly reasonable. 21 I think what's interesting though about Jeremy 22 Paxman -- I hadn't actually read the speech until you 23 kindly sent it to me as part of the bundle -- is even 24 Jeremy, who I think in this issue is one of those people 25 that is really prepared to think these issues through, Page 18</p>	<p>1 reference to the point that news and comment has become 2 blurred, they say: 3 "As a result, he envisages a statutory body, such as 4 Ofcom, dealing with the press too, dispensing, they say, 5 with the gentlemen's agreements of the Press Complaints 6 Commission." 7 It's interesting that they use the term "gentlemen's 8 agreements", but are you envisaging a statutory body 9 such as Ofcom? 10 A. I think Ofcom probably is the right body to decide 11 issues of media policy. I don't actually envisage it 12 replacing the PCC. I don't think I actually said that 13 in my speech either, by the way. 14 Q. No, I think it's an inference they're drawing rather 15 than something you stated expressly. You're absolutely 16 right about that. Then subsequently they say -- on 17 statutory control, they say: 18 "This is specious. In the eyes of the public, the 19 two are quite distinct. He ignores the point that if 20 people don't like a particular newspaper, they needn't 21 buy it. He cannot be so naive as to imagine that 22 putting newspapers under statutory regulation will do 23 anything other than make them eventually obedient to the 24 government of the day." 25 Do you accept that charge of naivety or not? Page 20</p>

5 (Pages 17 to 20)

<p>1 A. I think in the speech I never actually went so far as to 2 propose that but, no, I think -- look, the notion that 3 it's impossible to find a space between no proper system 4 of accountability and the press becoming a wholly owned 5 subsidiary of the government of the day, I just think 6 that is an assertion that is, frankly, ludicrous. 7 Q. The Daily Mail, or rather MailOnline -- it may or may 8 not have been the Daily Mail -- 13 June 2007. The 9 headline is "The magnificent self-delusion of Mr Blair". 10 To cut a long story short, they characterised the media 11 as behaving like a great sloppy labrador which 12 repeatedly bestowed its affections on you, rather than 13 a feral beast. 14 A. It's a description of the Daily Mail that I don't 15 totally recognise, I have to say. Yeah, interesting, 16 that one. I haven't come across that before. But I'm 17 the one with self-delusion, am I? 18 Q. Right. Arguably, there's a more cerebral contribution 19 from the Guardian. 20 A. Right. 21 Q. It's the leader of 13 June 2007, which still is under 22 tab 50 in this bundle. They say there's an easy 23 response -- I'm paraphrasing: 24 "It is to accuse the Prime Minister, the master, 25 some will say, of half-truth, evasions and spin, of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 21</p>	<p>1 would you associate yourself with those observations or 2 not? 3 A. Pretty much, yeah. 4 Q. Then they say in the next paragraph: 5 "The BBC is still the best ..." 6 A. Sorry, are you on the Guardian, are you? 7 Q. I'm still on the Guardian, Mr Blair. 8 A. Yes. 9 Q. They say in the next paragraph: 10 "The BBC is still the best journalistic organisation 11 in the world." 12 Then a little bit later on: 13 "There's something about the polemical, 14 argumentative, obstinate traditions of the British 15 national press which grinds out a form of truth every 16 bit as effectively as the supposedly more objective 17 newspapers found in mainland Europe and North America." 18 Again I suppose that sentiment you would agree with 19 as well, would you? 20 A. Yeah, absolutely. In fact, better than most of the 21 papers in mainland Europe. 22 Q. Their real point is about the messenger, which again 23 we'll come to later. We've already touched on it. 24 The Financial Times piece, again on 13 June. Again, 25 it's the point it's the wrong messenger. I suppose it's</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 23</p>
<p>1 breathtaking --" 2 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It's actually the Financial Times, 3 I think. 4 MR JAY: The one I'm looking at -- 5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Tab 50? 6 MR JAY: That's the last page. Before that, sir, there's 7 the Guardian, the leader of 13 June. Do you have that 8 one? 9 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I have it. Right sermon, wrong 10 preacher; is that it? 11 MR JAY: That's the one. 12 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I'm only reading the headline. 13 MR JAY: Again, they're picking up the religiose bit when 14 they refer to a homily, but we'll pass over that. 15 A. I never actually mentioned religion in the course of my 16 speech on the media, but anyway. 17 Q. They do say in the second paragraph, five lines down: 18 "He [that's you] is right to highlight some of the 19 worst qualities of some British journalism: a seam of 20 sourness and aggression, a bullying, puffed-up 21 self-regard, a casualness about the borders between 22 public and private, an obsession with impact over 23 proportionality. All those are there on a daily basis 24 for anyone to see." 25 That's not exactly how you put it in the speech, but</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 22</p>	<p>1 difficult for you to comment on that. 2 A. No, except that it would underline my point that for me 3 to have taken this issue on would have been extremely 4 difficult. I mean, you can see -- this was a speech 5 made shortly before I left office. You can imagine the 6 reaction if I'd made the speech sort of two years into 7 being Prime Minister. 8 Q. Let me move on to a slightly different topic, although 9 probably still related. Paragraph 14 of your statement, 10 Mr Blair, 05576. 11 A. Yes. 12 Q. You fairly make the point and others have made the same 13 point: 14 "It could be very hard to adopt a policy when it was 15 likely to be the subject of an intense media campaign 16 against it." 17 Can we explore the issue of democratic 18 accountability? If the media are right and they do 19 represent at least a majority of their readers' voices 20 or views, why is there a problem here at all? 21 A. There is absolutely no problem in the press being 22 partisan for particular parties or particular political 23 view points. That's been part of our journalism for 24 years and years and years and that's perfectly 25 acceptable. So there's absolutely no reason why they</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 24</p>

6 (Pages 21 to 24)

<p>1 shouldn't, for example, choose to run certain stories 2 because it accords with their political position. 3 My distinction is between that and how you actually 4 report the story as a piece of journalism. So if you 5 take the issue to do with Europe, what I would say is 6 that those papers who are Eurosceptic are perfectly 7 entitled to be Eurosceptic. They're perfectly entitled 8 to highlight things in Europe that are wrong. What they 9 shouldn't do is, frankly, make up a whole lot of 10 nonsense about Europe and dish that up to the readers, 11 because that's -- I mean, how does the reader know 12 that's not correct? 13 So, you know, now towards the end, particularly, 14 frankly, I just -- I remember when I had a huge battle 15 over the European Union or the British rebate, which was 16 a sort of hallowed thing, and when I had the presidency 17 of the European Union in 2005 and we had to do the new 18 budget deal and so on -- I mean, the misdescriptions of 19 what I was proposing and what, you know, Europe was 20 proposing -- because actually, for the first time under 21 these proposals, Britain was going to be paying roughly 22 the same as France, when, for decades, we hadn't -- you 23 know, that, in my view -- look, I didn't expect anything 24 else in this issue, but it wasn't straight reporting. 25 That doesn't mean to say if they find something out</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 25</p>	<p>1 the British state." 2 Fine. That's the comment piece, but the news piece 3 should at least be, within itself, accurate, even if 4 you've chosen to do that news piece because it supports 5 your point of view. I think there is a clear 6 distinction between those two things. 7 Q. The examples you give in the last sentence of 8 paragraph 14 are all quite, if I can put it in these 9 terms, visceral issues. Just take one of them. Take 10 gay rights as an example. How do you separate out fact 11 from opinion on that issue? 12 A. Well, I think it's -- it can be difficult to do that in 13 that issue, I agree. On the other hand, I think there 14 is a tone in which you can write and have that debate. 15 Now, frankly, on this issue things have changed 16 a huge amount in the 20 or 30 years I was in politics. 17 So in the 1980s, you had a pretty prejudiced way of 18 writing about gay issues and gay rights and so on, later 19 less so. But all I'm saying is that an issue like that, 20 you know, in the tone of your coverage, I think that is 21 also an issue, and I would say certainly the 1980s when 22 that was being debated, it was -- you know, you were 23 basically a sort of -- you know -- if you supported gay 24 rights, you weren't so much as supporting gay rights; 25 you were proselytising for people being gay. You know,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 27</p>
<p>1 that supports their case that it's all monstrous -- of 2 course, they're perfectly entitled to choose to run 3 anti-European stories rather than pro-European stories. 4 So to be very careful with what I'm suggesting, I'm not 5 suggesting they shouldn't be partisan and I'm not 6 suggesting that they shouldn't, even within that, be 7 perfectly entitled to choose that I'm going to highlight 8 this aspect of Europe because it supports my case, even 9 though there's a certain imbalance in, say, not choosing 10 one thing and another thing and so on. That's fine. 11 In my view, where this becomes very difficult on 12 policy issues is where you know that the actual facts 13 within the story will get slanted in a particular way. 14 Then it becomes a lot tougher to deal with because 15 you're having to -- you know, you can go out there and 16 say it's not correct, but ... 17 Q. Is this right, Mr Blair: you're not arguing necessarily 18 for balance, as such, but you're arguing for two things: 19 firstly, that fact and opinion are significant great, 20 and secondly, at least the facts are accurately, 21 objectively stated. Is that a correct analysis? 22 A. Absolutely, and I would say that is just a matter of 23 good journalism. That's what the journalism is, as 24 opposed to the person who writes the column of comment 25 that says, "I think this is all a terrible plot against</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 26</p>	<p>1 I think -- 2 Q. But on that issue, some would say the tone has shifted 3 because the zeitgeist has shifted. 4 A. Yes. 5 Q. In relation to Europe, it may not be possible to make 6 that observation, might it? 7 A. Well, not as yet, but let me be absolutely clear about 8 this. I'm pro-European, but I totally understand the 9 Eurosceptic case and the papers are perfectly entitled 10 to be Eurosceptic and put that case very strongly to 11 their readers. It's simply that, you know -- I think 12 someone did this in the course of his evidence and 13 I haven't done this myself -- when you tabulate all the 14 various things that have been said about Europe that 15 aren't actually correct, that bit of it should be 16 correct. So if you disagree with Europe, you disagree 17 with it, but on the facts. I think that is 18 a distinction that -- you know, I think it's pretty 19 obvious to most people. 20 And by the way, I think that's -- if you put that to 21 the readers, they'd say, "Well, of course." They 22 wouldn't say, "It's impossible. I think it's right that 23 they tell me something that isn't correct." 24 Q. Is there any newspaper which meets your blueprint for 25 appropriate behaviour on the European issue?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 28</p>

7 (Pages 25 to 28)

<p>1 A. Well, I think if you took, for example, the Times 2 newspaper, which is basically Eurosceptic but I think it 3 reports Europe fairly. That's not to say if they come 4 across a story that sort of, as it were, fuels your 5 receptors, they won't publish it, but why not? They're 6 perfectly entitled to. But you know, I think they're 7 a paper that will basically try to report it fairly. 8 Q. Okay. Can I come back to a point which you open with. 9 Paragraph 4(d) of your statement, our page 05573. You 10 say: 11 "Most important of all, certain of the newspapers 12 are used by their owners or editors as instruments of 13 political power ..." 14 Then you say: 15 "... in which the boundary between news and comment 16 is deliberately blurred." 17 Then in paragraph 7, you're careful there not to 18 identify which newspapers are, as it were, guilty of 19 these characteristics and which are not, and it may be 20 you would not wish to do so now, but some people would 21 differ quite markedly as to which newspaper falls into 22 which category. Will you accept at least that? 23 A. Up to a point, actually. I think, you know, their -- 24 whether you agree with their position or not is another 25 matter. The heart of my argument to you is really this:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 29</p>	<p>1 a constituency of circulation 3 million or readers 2 8 million? 3 A. Yeah. I mean, the Sun and the Mail, frankly, are the 4 two most powerful of the papers, and the Sun, partly 5 because it is prepared to shift, it makes it all the 6 more important. 7 I don't think there's anything wrong with that 8 per se, by the way, just as I don't think there's 9 anything wrong with the Daily Mail being against my 10 government or against me. It's -- you know, as I say, 11 I think it's -- where I put the line is in the: once 12 they're against you, that's it. It's full on, full 13 frontal, day in, day out. Basically a lifetime 14 commitment. 15 Q. Just on the floating voter point, do you feel that that 16 has been the result of some sort of deliberate strategy 17 or is it just the accidental by-product of events? 18 A. I think it's difficult to work out that, actually. 19 I think it's partly because Rupert Murdoch himself, 20 I think, is not actually a sort of identikit right wing 21 person. In other words, I would never describe him as 22 a sort of -- I'm indicating my own political prejudices 23 here but as a sort of tribal Tory. I wouldn't say that 24 at all. You know, he has bits of him that are very 25 anti-establishment, sort of meritocratic, I would say.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 31</p>
<p>1 that the problem that you have as a political leader is 2 that where, with certain parts of the media, the press 3 becomes not merely politically partisan in their comment 4 or editorial line but in their news coverage, then it 5 becomes all the more important -- and that's why I use 6 the word "crucial" -- that you try and prevent yourself 7 becoming an object of that attack, and that is what 8 is -- gives rise to the -- this closeness, and as I say 9 to you, also in paragraph 8, emphatically, this is not 10 confined to the Murdoch media. I'm not saying the 11 Murdoch newspapers, the tabloid ones, did not have that 12 characteristic -- they do -- but they're not the only 13 ones by any means at all. 14 So I would say probably the -- I think you'd say the 15 bulk of what we call the tabloid press basically writes 16 in a way that if they're against a particular policy, 17 party or person, it's a pretty all-out affair. 18 Q. Certainly the position is stated with crystalline and 19 direct clarity in every conceivable instance, one might 20 say? 21 A. Yeah. 22 Q. Can I ask you to comment on the Sun, which many have 23 looked at as a sort of paradigm. Do you agree that it 24 generates a special power or influence because of its 25 appearance of being a form of floating voter with</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 30</p>	<p>1 So maybe it's partly derived from his own thinking. 2 Is there an element of political calculation? 3 I don't know. I suppose there could be. 4 Q. You say in paragraph 9 "the wrong paradigm". This is to 5 confuse political objectives with commercial interests. 6 A. Yeah. 7 Q. Isn't it possible to argue that although the primary 8 purpose on this approach would be the exercise of 9 political power, the secondary purpose may well be to 10 advance the interests of the paper, including its 11 commercial interests? 12 A. Yeah -- look, I think what I'm really saying here is -- 13 of course, like any commercial organisation, they'll 14 have their commercial interests there, but I also point 15 out in my statement -- and I will say this very strongly 16 when we get on to the detail of this -- actually, we 17 decided more stuff against the Murdoch interests than we 18 did in favour of it. Now, did that mean that they 19 changed their support for me? No, it didn't, as 20 a matter of fact, even though we did some things they 21 really didn't like. 22 On the other hand, of course, all of these -- 23 I mean, look, all of these organisations have their 24 commercial interests and their commercial interests are 25 important. I actually didn't personally -- I can't</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 32</p>

1 speak for others -- I didn't feel under pressure in
 2 relation to commercial interests from the Murdoch
 3 people, or indeed anyone else. The pressure for me was
 4 more political but that's maybe because the issues
 5 didn't arise in a particular way. I don't know.
 6 Q. You mention the Daily Mail and the Associated titles.
 7 The influence they exercise not through appearing to be
 8 a floating voter because that's not the way they
 9 operate. Therefore, how do they, in your view, exercise
 10 their power and influence?
 11 A. Look, the Daily Mail, frankly, is a subject on which
 12 I wouldn't claim to exercise much objectivity. The fact
 13 is, if you fall out with the controlling element of the
 14 Daily Mail, that is -- you are then going to be subject
 15 to a huge and sustained attack. The Daily Mail, for
 16 me -- they've attacked me, my family, my children, those
 17 people associated with me, day in, day out, not merely
 18 when I was in office but subsequent to it as well.
 19 So that is -- and they do it very well, very
 20 effectively, and it's very powerful. You know, I did
 21 a -- I just asked my office to do a random analysis of
 22 50 stories straight after the 2005 election when, after
 23 all, I'd been re-elected for the third time, and 50
 24 stories just prior to leaving office, just the 50
 25 stories that you take on either side of that. So if you

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1 have a positive, neutral, negative columns: in the
 2 positive, zero, in the neutral, zero, in the negative,
 3 100. Maybe I did nothing right during that period, but,
 4 you know, I think -- look, I don't think there's much
 5 doubt about where they stand.
 6 So my point is this is why I say it's very important
 7 not to see this as simply about the Murdoch media. With
 8 any of these big media groups, you fall out with them
 9 and you watch out, because it's a -- it is literally
 10 relentless and unremitting once that happens, and my
 11 view is that that is what creates this situation in
 12 which these media people get a power in the system that
 13 is unhealthy and which I have felt, throughout my time,
 14 uncomfortable with.
 15 As I say, I took the decision -- and this I'm well
 16 aware could be subject to criticism -- I took the
 17 strategic decision to manage this, not confront it, but
 18 the power of it is indisputable.
 19 Q. You mention the controlling element within the
 20 Associated titles. When you started off, it was the
 21 third Viscount Rothermere, I believe. He died in 1998.
 22 Mr Dacre, of course, was editor of the Daily Mail from
 23 1992, but Sir David English was editor-in-chief until
 24 his death, equally in 1998. Where, until 1998, did
 25 power lie, as it were, within these titles in your view?

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1 A. Oh, I think when Lord Rothermere, the father, was
 2 around, and David English, they were the controlling
 3 people there, and then, when they passed away -- both of
 4 them, I think, within a short period of time of each
 5 other -- then obviously it was -- Mr Dacre was then the
 6 chief person there.
 7 Q. So he would be described as the controlling element from
 8 1998; is that right?
 9 A. Yes, I would say so.
 10 Q. And not the fourth Viscount Rothermere?
 11 A. I don't think so, personally, but, you know, I may be
 12 right or I may be wrong about that.
 13 Q. Okay. Relationships between proprietors and editors.
 14 The present Prime Minister has said words to this
 15 effect, or maybe exactly:
 16 "We all got too close to News International."
 17 Should you be included in that sentence?
 18 A. Yes, as I say, the way I put it is the closeness --
 19 I mean, for me, with Rupert Murdoch and everyone else,
 20 this is a working relationship. It's actually --
 21 subsequent to leaving office, I would say that my
 22 relationship is completely different with him and with
 23 his family now. In office, it wasn't -- this is why
 24 I say this concept of cosiness is not quite the way
 25 I would put it. It's that you were in a position --

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1 I mean, it was a working relationship, but you were in
 2 a position where you were dealing with very powerful
 3 people who had a big impact within the political system,
 4 and, as I say, the big impact was hugely intensified and
 5 multiplied by the fact that if they were against you,
 6 they were absolutely out -- all out against you. And
 7 that's the issue, in my view.
 8 Would these relationships have mattered in any
 9 event? Yes. Look, to give you an example, in 2005
 10 I thought it possible the Financial Times would shift
 11 back to supporting the Conservatives. Now, I cared
 12 about that. So, so far as I was able, I tried to make
 13 persuasive arguments as to why they should stick with
 14 us. I wouldn't for a minute suggest the Financial
 15 Times, had they decided to support the Conservatives,
 16 would have then gone all out in their news reporting
 17 against me. That wouldn't have happened. So even if
 18 newspapers are behaving in a perfectly -- you know,
 19 within the bounds of separating news and comment and
 20 everything, these relationships matter. And it's
 21 important to say that, otherwise I think we'll get to
 22 a completely unrealistic view where we ignore history
 23 and say politicians and media people should have nothing
 24 to do with each other. We're bound to have that close
 25 interaction.

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<p>1 It's not the closeness, in my judgment, that's the 2 problem; it's the kind of imbalance that comes into it, 3 because you know that at a certain point, with certain 4 elements of them, if you're in a position where you're 5 pursuing a course you believe in and they don't believe 6 in it, or they don't believe in you, then you're in 7 a big fight. That big fight's something you have to 8 take into account before you decide to go off in 9 a particular direction.</p> <p>10 So, you know, that's the difference that I would 11 say. So I've always -- you know, when I've heard people 12 describe this as cosy and close and so on, that's not 13 quite the way I would put it. I don't know whether it's 14 worse to put it in the way I'm putting it, but it's 15 a little different, I think.</p> <p>16 Q. Possibly it's an unspoken but really self-evident aspect 17 of the terms of engagement between you. Is that a fair 18 description?</p> <p>19 A. Yes, I think that is a fair description. I mean, you 20 know, they're aware of the power they have and you're 21 aware that they have it.</p> <p>22 Q. In a slightly different context, I used the term "finely 23 tuned antennae", which some people didn't like very 24 much, but does that come close to describing it or not 25 in your view?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 37</p>	<p>1 So, you see, for example, with Rupert Murdoch, was 2 it important to try and get the Sun on board anyway? 3 Absolutely. You know, they had been, you know, a major 4 part of supporting Mrs Thatcher and the Conservative 5 Party in all those 18 years and, you know, they did, 6 frankly, and do, represent a certain strain of support 7 that Labour might have but hadn't had throughout the 8 1980s and early 1990s. So, you know, even if the 9 situation had not been as I described, if I'd been given 10 the chance to go and persuade them to come over to 11 Labour, I would have taken that.</p> <p>12 That's why I think it's just important that we try 13 and calibrate this very carefully. Otherwise I think, 14 you know, we'll get into a situation that's a bit 15 unrealistic.</p> <p>16 Q. Okay. Do you accept that you may have contributed to 17 the mystique, if I can put it in that way, by, at the 18 time, not publicising each meeting with Mr Murdoch 19 and/or by inviting him through the back door?</p> <p>20 A. I don't think we published any of the meetings with the 21 media people, actually. But the reason for having -- 22 I mean, not just him, but certain people who you knew 23 would then spend days trying to explain what you were 24 talking about, was simply that you would spend days 25 explaining what you were talking about, so -- look,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 39</p>
<p>1 A. In the sense of ...?</p> <p>2 Q. That was in the sense, I think, of a particular lunch at 3 Chequers before your time on 4 January 1981. You 4 probably will recall that little vignette, but I'm now 5 speaking more generally.</p> <p>6 A. Finely tuned antennae in the sense of your antennae to 7 what you thought their --</p> <p>8 Q. Exactly.</p> <p>9 A. You knew what each other's positions were. I mean, they 10 weren't very secret. But I think that in itself -- you 11 know, this is -- one of the things I find hardest about 12 this is, as I say, distinguishing what is wrong from 13 what is inevitable. I can't imagine a situation, given 14 the penetration of our media -- and this what is I think 15 the other really important thing, which is the way 16 I think broadcasters are very, very strongly influenced 17 by the agenda of the press. It would be pretty bizarre 18 if the senior politicians didn't have reasonably strong 19 relationships with major media people. I don't think 20 that in and of itself is unhealthy, I have to say. 21 I think it is virtually inevitable and sensible for any 22 political leader. It's this additional dimension that 23 I'm honing in on and saying that's what I think is the 24 probably, because that's what I -- I'm really almost 25 describing how I felt at the time.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 38</p>	<p>1 I think in future it's probably better you publish 2 everything but I don't think we actually published other 3 media meetings either. But I can check on that.</p> <p>4 Q. Though there may be a huge leap between lack of 5 transparency and conspiracy, lack of transparency 6 certainly gives rise to speculation. Would you accept 7 that?</p> <p>8 A. Yes, I mean I don't -- I think Alastair Campbell said to 9 you in his evidence that and he left he came in the back 10 door, but there was no great conspiracy. It's just that 11 you didn't need another great another flurry about 12 whether he was coming back or taking over or whatever.</p> <p>13 Q. In relation to Mrs Brooks, do you feel that you got too 14 close to her when you were in power?</p> <p>15 A. I don't know -- look, Rebekah Brooks mattered, 16 obviously, because she -- I think she was the editor of 17 the Sun during my time. She didn't actually come to 18 this more senior position at News International until 19 after I'd left. And I guess towards the end 20 particularly -- and I think you'll see a lot of the 21 meetings and calls were towards the end -- there wasn't 22 a great deal of support left. So those people that did, 23 sure, I was pretty close to.</p> <p>24 But again, bluntly, the decision-maker was not 25 Rebekah Brooks in relation to this.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 40</p>

10 (Pages 37 to 40)

<p>1 Q. It was obviously Mr Murdoch?</p> <p>2 A. Yes. He was the key decision maker for sure.</p> <p>3 Q. A schedule of all your contacts with proprietors and</p> <p>4 editors between May 1997 and June 2007 has been</p> <p>5 provided. It runs to 18 pages. I'm sure we can put</p> <p>6 that on the screen.</p> <p>7 A. Yeah.</p> <p>8 Q. There's another schedule which we've prepared which</p> <p>9 looks at interactions with Mr Murdoch and -- only one of</p> <p>10 them, really -- with Rebekah Wade between 15 September</p> <p>11 1994 and 1 May 1997, which of course was election day.</p> <p>12 There's only one point arising out of those earlier</p> <p>13 interactions. There are not that many of them. It's</p> <p>14 dinner at Mossmans on 15 September 1994, which had been</p> <p>15 arranged by Gus and Gillian Fisher. Do you remember</p> <p>16 anything about that?</p> <p>17 A. I remember that such a dinner took place. I don't</p> <p>18 remember a great deal about it, frankly, but I've seen</p> <p>19 this Andrew Neil account.</p> <p>20 Q. There's an account -- we don't know its source -- from</p> <p>21 Mr Neil. Full disclosure. In the bundle we've put</p> <p>22 together for you, it's pages 31 and 32.</p> <p>23 A. Yeah.</p> <p>24 Q. Mr Fisher is described as Rupert's senior man in London.</p> <p>25 Is that right or not? This is September 1994, of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 41</p>	<p>1 Q. Mr Fisher.</p> <p>2 A. Oh, Mr Fisher. I thought you said Mrs Fisher.</p> <p>3 Q. No.</p> <p>4 A. Okay.</p> <p>5 Q. I think "relationship" is just in the sense of a very</p> <p>6 loose friendship.</p> <p>7 A. Yeah.</p> <p>8 Q. I'm not sure exactly what the implication is there,</p> <p>9 though.</p> <p>10 A. Right.</p> <p>11 Q. I think the suggestion may be that you well knew what</p> <p>12 his position was and what his company's position was on</p> <p>13 the cross-media ownership issue. Is that right?</p> <p>14 A. Yeah, of course. I mean -- and look, our position</p> <p>15 was -- as I say, I mean, I decided I was not going to</p> <p>16 take this issue on.</p> <p>17 I actually don't believe, by the way, that ownership</p> <p>18 is the issue here. I think it's the rules under which</p> <p>19 the media operate. But we had -- or I had taken the</p> <p>20 decision we weren't going to do a big inquiry into</p> <p>21 cross-media ownership. I thought it would be</p> <p>22 a distraction for the Labour Party coming into office.</p> <p>23 I don't specifically recall -- it's perfectly possible</p> <p>24 it would have come out at the dinner and I'd have</p> <p>25 explained our position, as I would have on statutory</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 43</p>
<p>1 course.</p> <p>2 A. I think so. I think I remember him being there for --</p> <p>3 I think for a reasonably short time, actually, but</p> <p>4 I certainly remember him, yeah.</p> <p>5 Q. Mr Neil says that he had been lobbying the Labour Party</p> <p>6 on News International's behalf on such issues as</p> <p>7 cross-media ownership and Sky TV's control of satellite</p> <p>8 scrambling systems. Did you know about that?</p> <p>9 A. I don't recall specifically being told about it, but</p> <p>10 look, I would have known what their position was,</p> <p>11 certainly on media ownership, and most particularly, the</p> <p>12 issue that I do remember they were very strong on was</p> <p>13 statutory recognition of trade unions, which, given</p> <p>14 obviously what had happened in the past, is not</p> <p>15 surprising.</p> <p>16 Q. According to Mr Neil, he -- this is Gus Fisher -- had</p> <p>17 also struck up a relationship with you.</p> <p>18 A. Mrs Gus Fisher?</p> <p>19 Q. I think it's --</p> <p>20 A. I'm afraid I -- I'm sorry, I don't recall that one,</p> <p>21 but ...</p> <p>22 Q. Nothing of that nature here.</p> <p>23 A. Which is not to say it didn't happen, by the way --</p> <p>24 Q. It's Mr Fisher, Mr Blair.</p> <p>25 A. Sorry?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 42</p>	<p>1 recognition.</p> <p>2 Q. Yes, because Mr Neil's account of the dinner, apart from</p> <p>3 it going, apparently, very well: Mr Murdoch indicated</p> <p>4 his newspapers were not wedded to the Tories. Does that</p> <p>5 chime with your recollection?</p> <p>6 A. Yeah, not specifically at that dinner, but I think it</p> <p>7 was clear that there was an openness there hadn't been</p> <p>8 before because of the way I was changing the Labour</p> <p>9 Party, and I think -- no, I hadn't actually put the</p> <p>10 clause 4 thing at that point up there, but it was</p> <p>11 obvious I was going to be a different type of Labour</p> <p>12 leader, so ...</p> <p>13 Q. Then you apparently indicated that media ownership Rules</p> <p>14 would not be onerous under Labour. Is it possible that</p> <p>15 you said that?</p> <p>16 A. I think "not onerous" is not the way I would have put</p> <p>17 it. I can't specifically remember what was said, but</p> <p>18 it's perfectly possible, if that issue came up, I would</p> <p>19 have said, "That's not an issue we're going to be taking</p> <p>20 on."</p> <p>21 Q. So whatever the position, by the end of that dinner,</p> <p>22 Mr Murdoch would have had some degree of comfort from</p> <p>23 you, at least in this particular domain. Are we agreed</p> <p>24 about that?</p> <p>25 A. Yeah, but I don't know that he would have particularly</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 44</p>

11 (Pages 41 to 44)

<p>1 taken it as -- I wasn't -- this was not something I was 2 doing in order to get support from the Murdoch empire. 3 On the contrary, it was something -- I wasn't going to 4 take this issue -- I've said right from the outset. If 5 we'd come into power and started a great thing about who 6 owned what in the media, it would have, in my view, been 7 a huge distraction for the Labour Party, and as I recall 8 it, the big issue they were genuinely worried about, and 9 where there was -- and I think they were perfectly 10 entitled to do this, by the way, where we were lobbying 11 very hard -- was on our commitment to trade union 12 recognition, because we -- and we did introduce trade 13 union recognition.</p> <p>14 Q. It may be there are two things going on here, that for 15 separate reasons the issue of cross-media ownership was 16 not an issue you felt you were going to undertake 17 because it would have been too controversial and would 18 have occupied too much time, but secondly, it might have 19 been necessary to communicate a degree of reassurance 20 about that to Mr Murdoch so at least he understood that. 21 Is that possible?</p> <p>22 A. Look, they would have understood it anyway when we 23 published our manifesto and so on, but of course, I'm 24 not -- I wasn't unaware of the fact that this would 25 have -- if we'd decided to do this, they would have been</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 45</p>	<p>1 trying to discern trends, which may be difficult, 2 certainly at an early stage, after 1 May 1997, you were 3 fairly, indeed entirely eclectic in your choice of who 4 you would meet with and speak to. In other words, we 5 see a whole range of editors and sometimes proprietors 6 from all the main national newspapers; is that fair?</p> <p>7 A. Mm-hm.</p> <p>8 Q. There's even a meeting with Mr Dacre on 1 July 1997.</p> <p>9 A. Yeah, I think there were several, actually, over time.</p> <p>10 Q. Those meetings with Mr Dacre appear to have ceased at 11 a certain point, certainly by about 2001. There's 12 a meeting on 18 January 2000 with him, but I think that 13 may be the last one.</p> <p>14 A. I didn't -- I haven't -- we literally were collating 15 this just on information that's come in on the last two 16 or three days. You may well be right.</p> <p>17 Q. There's some meetings with News International which 18 haven't been included, which may or may not be 19 correct --</p> <p>20 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I'm not sure you're right, actually, 21 to be fair, because on 13 July 2000, there was a dinner 22 with Mr Dacre and Lord Rothermere.</p> <p>23 Q. Yes. It's 2001, I think, was the --</p> <p>24 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Oh, you actually said 2000.</p> <p>25 MR JAY: Oh, did I?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 47</p>
<p>1 centre stage in that, and one of the reasons why the 2 Labour Party had always advocated this was partly 3 because they'd fallen out very badly with the whole 4 Murdoch press and this was, you know, in a sense, aimed 5 at them. That is absolutely correct. But I didn't then 6 and don't think now -- that's quite apart from the fact, 7 by the way, of what you should do or taking on these 8 broader issues to do with the press. I mean, 9 consistently my view was that it was not ownership that 10 was the issue, and I held that all the way through, and 11 still do, by the way, that the question is not (a) 12 whether you're foreign owners or British owners, or (b), 13 subject to competition and monopoly issues and trust 14 issues, about media ownership. The issue is the culture 15 and rules under which people play.</p> <p>16 So that's -- it was -- yes, of course, I wasn't 17 unaware of the fact that, you know, the Murdoch media 18 group would have been worried had we decided to launch 19 some great inquiry into cross-media ownership or media 20 ownership, but on the other hand, that's not actually 21 the reason why we took the position we did.</p> <p>22 Q. In terms of this schedule which you compiled, I think 23 with assistance from the Cabinet Office, to corroborate 24 various meetings, it runs to 18 pages. I think we can 25 put it on the screen. It is available. In terms of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 46</p>	<p>1 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: 2001. Very good.</p> <p>2 MR JAY: I don't think there's one after 2000.</p> <p>3 A. Yeah.</p> <p>4 Q. We can check, but I think I'm right about that. 5 As this goes through, the picture is, I think, 6 fairly stated to be a greater interaction with 7 Mr Murdoch and certainly with Rebekah Wade. Would that 8 be a fair assessment?</p> <p>9 A. Well, I think -- yeah, I mean as -- I mean, I think if 10 you collate all these meetings, I think about a third 11 were with -- and calls, by the way, because we've 12 included calls as well. I think basically half of the 13 interactions that we've recorded were calls and not 14 meetings, and I think it's about one-third with the 15 Murdoch media, two-thirds were with others, but I think 16 you're right -- obviously, certain people -- I mean, 17 frankly, it became pretty pointless to have the meetings 18 with, for example, the Mail group, past a certain point. 19 So in a sense there is a -- this probably then -- some 20 of the people get stripped out for reasons that are to 21 do with there really not being much point in doing it. 22 I think at a certain point the Express people told me 23 they had to change their line and then it became also 24 pretty pointless to see them.</p> <p>25 But just on the numbers of meetings, I actually</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 48</p>

12 (Pages 45 to 48)

<p>1 found this a bit confusing as to trying to align the 2 records in my diary, what Rupert Murdoch and others have 3 put in their evidence. For example, Piers Morgan says 4 that he met me on what would be, I think, 56 times, he 5 said, and I can't find that many, but that's not to say 6 it didn't happen. I mean, I just -- so I'm sort of 7 giving a disclaimer on this. There may have been, by 8 the way, sometimes calls or meetings that were fixed 9 that didn't take place, and at other times they may 10 have -- so -- 11 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But this can only be taken as a broad 12 picture. 13 A. Yeah. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It can't be analysed with the sort of 15 forensic accuracy that might otherwise be thought 16 appropriate, and it isn't necessary, I don't think, for 17 the purpose of the exercise. 18 A. Yes, because I wouldn't dispute in any shape or form 19 that I wasn't interacting with these people closely. 20 MR JAY: Rebekah Brooks, in her statement, has about five or 21 six additional lunches or dinners which you haven't 22 included, but she may or may not be right about those. 23 The references are 05275 and 05276 of the MOD3 file, but 24 I suspect nothing much is going to turn on all those. 25 A. Yeah, I think also it sometimes depends on whether, as Page 49</p>	<p>1 they were important. 2 Q. At that stage, of course, I think all the Murdoch papers 3 in the world -- whether there's 173 or 175 I can't 4 remember now, but they'd all taken the same position 5 before 11 March 2003, so there was no question of you, 6 as it were, persuading them to take a position which 7 they had not already attained for their own reasons. 8 But was the subject matter of any of the calls about the 9 tone of the coverage in the Sun and the Times or not? 10 A. No. No, it was really -- I mean, it was really to do 11 with -- I would be explaining this is how I saw things. 12 I think with him, probably, I would have also have been 13 asking him what the situation was in the US, for 14 example, in Australia, which were also major parts of 15 the Coalition. But no, it wouldn't have been about the 16 tone of the coverage. 17 I mean, look, they were supportive of it and that 18 was that. 19 Q. So the suggestion which someone has made that the 20 articles in the Sun which were hostile to President 21 Chirac, it's completely wrong, you would say, to 22 associate cause and effect here, that the subject of the 23 calls was nothing to do with that; is that right? 24 A. Absolutely, and by the way, since I was having to deal 25 with President Chirac, and in the aftermath -- where, Page 51</p>
<p>1 it were, it's a -- I think my stuff is basically about 2 specific meetings, but there may have been occasions 3 when you go to somebody's house or something and they 4 might be there, or something like that. Now, I haven't 5 included that as a meeting, unless the purpose was to 6 see them. 7 Q. At the time of the Iraq war, just in the run-up to it, 8 on page 11 of this little schedule, Mr Blair, you've 9 listed the three calls with Mr Murdoch, on 11, 13 and 10 19 March, but you would no doubt wish to draw attention 11 to the fact that there were calls with other editors and 12 meetings as well. 13 A. Yeah. Look, this is a huge issue, obviously. I mean, 14 my recollection is that I initiated one of those calls. 15 I actually in fact only remember two, but the records 16 show there were three, although I think they were no 17 more than 45 minutes in total for all three. But, you 18 know, I would have been wanting to explain what we were 19 doing, and I did this -- I think I had similar calls 20 with the Observer and the Telegraph, and indeed I had 21 a lunch later with the Guardian. So, you know, I think 22 that's -- it's not -- I wouldn't say there's anything 23 particularly unusual or odd about that when you're 24 facing such a huge issue. 25 Now, none of these calls were particularly long, but Page 50</p>	<p>1 I have to say, he behaved very graciously, given we'd 2 had this agreement -- the last thing I wanted was 3 suggestions we were winding up the Eurosceptic media to 4 go and denounce him. So both with him and with the 5 German chancellor at the time, I was actually very 6 concerned to make sure -- I think we had a European 7 council shortly after the Iraq action began and I was 8 actually very concerned at that to try to bring everyone 9 back together because we then wanted a United Nations 10 resolution, which we subsequently got, which then 11 validated the presence of foreign troops there. 12 So for me, it was very important we kept these 13 people on side. 14 Q. After the third election, which was April or May 2005 -- 15 it was April, actually -- virtually, not all, but the 16 majority of your interactions are either with Mr Murdoch 17 or Rebekah Wade in this schedule. Would you agree with 18 that? 19 A. It certainly becomes -- you know, at that point, 20 frankly, they are the main group that are still 21 reasonably supportive. Although I notice there are 22 others that come in too, by the way, but I think -- 23 especially as I was coming up to the point of departure, 24 because obviously I was trying also to get across the 25 legacy of ten years in office and so on, by then, Page 52</p>

<p>1 frankly, there was not a great deal they could do for me 2 one way or another, as it were, but I think -- you know, 3 inevitably, as time goes on, you tend to associate more 4 with those that at least will give you a fair shot of 5 it. 6 Q. They remain, I suppose, a sympathetic ear or pair of 7 ears in what was become increasingly hostile media 8 landscape? 9 A. Yes, it was very hostile during that time, and you know, 10 I had won a third election, I never intended to fight 11 a fourth, but I was under pretty constant pressure all 12 the way after 2005 to step down and there was a lot of 13 political manoeuvring around that, obviously. So that 14 was an important media relationship. 15 But I would say that was sort of more important 16 because -- for the reason you give, namely that there 17 was a certain amount of support and willingness at least 18 to put across our point of view, whereas by that time, 19 a significant part of the media were effectively a kind 20 of closed book to us. 21 Q. Can I look now at some evidence, if that is what it is, 22 of your interactions, in particular with the 23 News International papers and issues surrounding that 24 from 1994. In Chris Mullins' diaries, which is page 2 25 in the bundle we've prepared, he notes a meeting he had Page 53</p>	<p>1 "If I thinks we're going to win, he'll go easy on 2 us, but if he thought we could lose, he would turn on 3 us." 4 He added: 5 "If the press misbehave badly during the election 6 campaign, I will stop everything for two days and we'll 7 have a debate about what they're up to, who owns them, 8 the lot." 9 Then Mr Mullin: 10 "Did you say that to Murdoch?" 11 And your answer: 12 "Not in so many words." 13 Is that an accurate gist then of your conversation 14 with Mr Mullin? 15 A. I think it is. I mean, as I say, this is going back 16 18 years or 17 and a half years now, but certainly that 17 was my attitude. 18 I think now, by the way, I would have a slightly 19 different view. In other words, I think -- there was 20 a view of Rupert Murdoch, which I think Paul Keating 21 speaks to the same effect, which is that he just backs 22 the winner. My view now is it's not as simple as that 23 actually. There are very strong political views and 24 those actually do come first, I think, or put it like 25 this: they're equal first, let's say, with whatever Page 55</p>
<p>1 with you on 17 November 1994. 2 A. Yeah. 3 Q. You see at the bottom of page 2, three lines from the 4 bottom: 5 "We [that's you and Mr Mullin] talked about his 6 dinner with Murdoch, who apparently hadn't tried to 7 sound him out on his plans." 8 So far so good, at least as your recollection is of 9 that meeting? 10 A. Yeah, that might be, by the way, a reference to that Gus 11 Fisher dinner. I mean, I was saying to you -- I don't 12 know what he raised at that -- I can't recall it 13 precisely, but this is what I'm saying -- this is 14 in November, is it, 1994? 15 Q. Yes. 16 A. And the dinner was ...? 17 Q. The dinner was 15 September 1994. 18 A. So it probably was that dinner, actually. 19 Q. There's no evidence of any other dinner between 20 15 September and 17 November, and you might say -- well, 21 anyway, we can see what this says. 22 A. Yeah. 23 Q. "Tony said he had the impression that these days 24 Murdoch's principal issues were in Asia." 25 And then this: Page 54</p>	<p>1 interests he feels in being on the winning side or the 2 losing side, and -- you know, so I'm not -- my view of 3 this now is if he'd been persuaded -- I mean, it looked 4 as if we were going to win, so you didn't have to be 5 a genius to think we had a good chance of winning, 6 although when you've lost four a row, by the way, you 7 never think it's that clear. 8 So I'm not sure I would have the same view now about 9 that, but that may well have been what I said to Chris 10 and to -- and yes, look, if I'd ended up in a situation 11 where they turned on me, I would have had to fight back. 12 You know, there's no -- that would have been the only 13 recourse. And we weren't -- in 1992, we weren't really 14 in a position where we were able to fight back, but this 15 time we would have. 16 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It puts them in a tremendously 17 powerful position. I mean, here you are embarking upon 18 the prospect of government, and you're sufficiently 19 concerned to say, "Well, look, if they really are going 20 to turn on us, then all bets are off, we'll have to do 21 something about it", and I'd be just interested in your 22 view on the power that that means there does in fact 23 reside in just a few people. 24 A. Well, I -- I think basically, there is a substantial 25 power there. As I say, in my view, not simply in the Page 56</p>

<p>1 Murdoch media.</p> <p>2 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: No, I understand that, I understand.</p> <p>3 A. But, yes, look, there's no -- I was looking at this as</p> <p>4 the leader of the Labour Party. We lose four elections.</p> <p>5 As I say, I went through that 1992 election. Now, by</p> <p>6 the way, there are all sorts of reasons, mistakes that</p> <p>7 we made, which meant that the election result -- I don't</p> <p>8 blame the media for us having lost. I make that</p> <p>9 absolutely clear. But, no, the power is significant,</p> <p>10 and it's significant for the reason that I give. It</p> <p>11 would be significant anyway. That's why I have to --</p> <p>12 I keep qualifying what I'm saying because I think if you</p> <p>13 have a readership of 3 to 4 million, even if the</p> <p>14 newspapers are behaving in the most totally proper way,</p> <p>15 that's power, and I think -- I don't know any other way</p> <p>16 of describing it.</p> <p>17 But yes, I mean, if you looked at those main media</p> <p>18 blocs, of which the Murdoch press were the most powerful</p> <p>19 but there were others that were very powerful as well,</p> <p>20 yeah, that was definitely a major factor had you to take</p> <p>21 into account when you were working out your strategy for</p> <p>22 winning and governing.</p> <p>23 Now, as I say, was it more -- you know, supposing</p> <p>24 they decided to oppose us in the 1997 election. My view</p> <p>25 is we would still have won. So I think we have to also</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 57</p>	<p>1 A. Yeah, I can't honestly remember precisely what I would</p> <p>2 have said, and frankly it wasn't -- you know, it wasn't</p> <p>3 an occasion, that dinner, as I recall it, where I was</p> <p>4 going out there to start banging the table, so</p> <p>5 I don't -- I don't know whether it sums up what I said</p> <p>6 to him or the implication or not, really.</p> <p>7 Q. Then at the end of this little encounter with Mr Mullin,</p> <p>8 you apparently say:</p> <p>9 "My absolutely priority is to win. I know that</p> <p>10 sounds unprincipled, but I just see it as my role in</p> <p>11 life."</p> <p>12 Might you have said that?</p> <p>13 A. Yup, sounds like it. I mean, by the way, let me</p> <p>14 emphasise: I don't think it's unprincipled to win.</p> <p>15 I think if you believe in what you're doing, you should.</p> <p>16 But yes, I don't -- it would be pointless to do anything</p> <p>17 else. But I saw an ability to go out there and persuade</p> <p>18 the Murdoch group, as I did with others, as important.</p> <p>19 Q. Mr Neil has attributed something that you said to him.</p> <p>20 Page 15 of this bundle. This is the introduction to the</p> <p>21 paperback edition of his book, "Full disclosure". He</p> <p>22 says, about ten lines down:</p> <p>23 "Blair once said to me: 'How we treat</p> <p>24 Rupert Murdoch's media interests when in power will</p> <p>25 depend on how his newspapers treat the Labour Party in</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 59</p>
<p>1 be careful of -- I think actually we were sometimes</p> <p>2 guilty of ascribing to them a power that they ultimately</p> <p>3 don't really have and actually have less today than</p> <p>4 I think back then, but sitting -- trying to put myself</p> <p>5 back 18 years and sitting in that seat and thinking,</p> <p>6 "Right, how are we going to create the right</p> <p>7 circumstances in which we get a fair hearing for our</p> <p>8 case?", this was important.</p> <p>9 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Mr Jay, is that convenient?</p> <p>10 MR JAY: Yes.</p> <p>11 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: We have a break to allow the</p> <p>12 shorthand writer to recover.</p> <p>13 A. Right.</p> <p>14 (11.24 am)</p> <p>15 (A short break)</p> <p>16 (11.35 am)</p> <p>17 MR JAY: Mr Blair, the other point on this extract from</p> <p>18 Mr Mullins' diary, the lines:</p> <p>19 "Did you say that to Murdoch?"</p> <p>20 "Not in so many words."</p> <p>21 You're intending to communicate to Mr Mullin that</p> <p>22 obviously the clear and stark message which we see at</p> <p>23 the top of the page might not have been imparted to</p> <p>24 Mr Murdoch; a more attenuated, subtle version might have</p> <p>25 been. Do you accept that or not?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 58</p>	<p>1 the run-up to the election."</p> <p>2 Might you have said that to him?</p> <p>3 A. I don't recall saying that, frankly, but I think the</p> <p>4 general tone of what I might well have said to him is:</p> <p>5 "Look, if Rupert Murdoch's going to wage war on us,</p> <p>6 we're going to stand up to them."</p> <p>7 But all the way through, for me, as it were, the</p> <p>8 issue of media interests -- other than the fact, as</p> <p>9 I averred to at the outset, I'd taken a strategic</p> <p>10 decision I was not going to put this at the forefront of</p> <p>11 our programme as a government, you know, I was, as it</p> <p>12 were -- that was not my issue. So, you know, I don't</p> <p>13 think it's a question of media interests, but had</p> <p>14 they -- as I'm saying to Chris Mullin back then -- and</p> <p>15 I don't, as I say, recall precisely the words I used,</p> <p>16 but there's no doubt at all that if what they'd done is</p> <p>17 started to treat me as they had Neil Kinnock, I would</p> <p>18 have fought back in a very tough way.</p> <p>19 Q. Can we move forward to Hayman Island and Mr Campbell's</p> <p>20 account in his diary. First of all, page 6 of this</p> <p>21 bundle. The entry for 16 July 1995, about halfway down.</p> <p>22 This is what Mr Campbell attributes to what Mr Keating,</p> <p>23 the then Australian Prime Minister, told you:</p> <p>24 "On Murdoch he told TB: 'He's a big bad bastard and</p> <p>25 the only way you can deal with him is make sure he</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 60</p>

15 (Pages 57 to 60)

1 thinks you can be a big bad bastard too."
 2 Is that what Mr Keating said, or words to that
 3 effect?
 4 **A. It sounds absolutely like what Paul Keating would have**
 5 **said. I mean, again, I don't recall the precise**
 6 **language, but I guess this it is how Alastair recorded**
 7 **this contemporaneously, so I'm perfectly happy to accept**
 8 **it.**
 9 Q. "You can do deals with him without ever saying a deal is
 10 done, but the only thing he cares about is his business
 11 and the only thing which he respects is strength."
 12 Was that advice given by Mr Keating?
 13 **A. That was Paul Keating's view, and he, as he does,**
 14 **expressed himself in robust terms. I mean, I actually**
 15 **came in time to have a different view myself, which**
 16 **wasn't as simple as that, but, yeah, it's perfectly**
 17 **possible he said that. As I say, if Alistair's recorded**
 18 **that at the time, I'm happy to accept it.**
 19 Q. Because Mr Keating's statement, I suppose, chimes with
 20 the implied deal thesis, which, are we clear, do you
 21 accept or do you reject it?
 22 **A. So far as we're concerned -- I mean, I can't answer for**
 23 **him, obviously -- so far as we're concerned, absolutely**
 24 **I do reject it. There was no deal on issues to do with**
 25 **the media with Rupert Murdoch, or indeed with anybody**
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1 else, either express or implied, and to be fair, he
 2 never sought such a thing.
 3 So was I aware of the fact that he had certain
 4 interests and was I aware of the fact the media as
 5 a whole had a very strong interest in us not legislating
 6 on the media? Absolutely. But in terms of, implied or
 7 express, some deal about media interests, absolutely
 8 not. Indeed, as I go on to say in my statement, when we
 9 actually came to the specific issues in relation to the
 10 Murdoch media group, we more often decided against them
 11 than in favour of them.
 12 Q. The last comment of Mr Keating's at page 8, we're still
 13 on 16 July. I think you'd just been to a barbecue.
 14 About ten lines down:
 15 "You have so remember with Rupert, it is all about
 16 Rupert. Rupert is number one, two, three and four as
 17 far as Rupert is concerned. Anna and the kids come next
 18 and everything else is a long way behind."
 19 Is that what he might have said?
 20 **A. Yeah, he may well have said that. Again, I'm perfectly**
 21 **happy to accept it. You know, there was a -- the**
 22 **relationship with the Australian Labour Party and**
 23 **Rupert Murdoch is a whole other volume, as it were, and**
 24 **I think Paul -- Paul's view of it was very -- you know,**
 25 **was very straightforward. As I say, in time I didn't**
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1 **really quite buy the crudeness of that, but it sounds to**
 2 **me exactly the type of thing he would have said.**
 3 Q. Okay. Can we move forward in time to 29 January --
 4 we're now in 1997 --
 5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Just before you move from the Hayman
 6 Islands -- presumably this was, for perfectly
 7 understandable reasons, a charm offensive. You wanted
 8 the Murdoch press to support the Labour Party, for
 9 understandable reasons. Does that not come out in
 10 something else that appears in Mr Campbell's diaries,
 11 where you got somebody to go through the speech from
 12 a Murdoch angle -- this is page 6:
 13 "He liked it, thought it had a clear message. There
 14 was enough in it for the News Corp lot and enough for
 15 the anti-Murdoch neuralgics."
 16 **A. Absolutely. Look, I wouldn't have been going all the**
 17 **way around the world -- and I remember I had to go after**
 18 **one Prime Minister's questions and return for the**
 19 **next -- if it hadn't been a very deliberate and, again,**
 20 **very strategic decision that I was going to go and try**
 21 **and persuade them. I had a minimum and maximum**
 22 **objective. The minimum objective was to stop them**
 23 **tearing us to pieces and the maximum objectives was, if**
 24 **possible, to open the way to support.**
 25 Now, actually, the speech I gave -- yes, of course
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1 you had to balance it very carefully. There's no policy
 2 positions I changed, and actually in the speech I went
 3 out of my way -- and we were very careful about this --
 4 to make sure I emphasised support for minimum wage,
 5 union recognition, pro-European position, increases in
 6 public investment, all of which may not have been what
 7 they wanted to hear. On the other hand, what I felt
 8 perfectly comfortable in doing was saying -- and this
 9 I was perfectly comfortable with -- saying, "This Labour
 10 Party is going to be a party of aspiration, not merely
 11 redistribution. It's going to be a party that's going
 12 to appeal to the emerging aspirant working class. It's
 13 going to be a party that is essentially about creating
 14 a meritocratic society and expanding opportunity and
 15 it's not going to go back to the old ways." But that
 16 was a message I was determined to give to the country.
 17 Part of this for me, with the Murdoch media group,
 18 was me, as it were, using them as a conduit to that
 19 vote, and I don't -- as I say, I don't know think
 20 that -- I would strongly defend and say you're perfectly
 21 entitled to do that, and they were -- you know, to bring
 22 the Sun and the News of the World to the point where at
 23 least they were prepared to give you a fair hearing was,
 24 you know -- you've got to think back to that time. That
 25 was kind of revolutionary for the Labour Party to be in
 Page 64

<p>1 that position.</p> <p>2 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But it required you at least to have</p> <p>3 thought about, if not calibrated, what you knew</p> <p>4 Mr Murdoch would like to hear.</p> <p>5 A. Absolutely. You know, if you're going out to go and</p> <p>6 persuade someone -- indeed, you can say this about the</p> <p>7 voters in general and the rest of the media group, but</p> <p>8 of course you were going to calibrate carefully. Again,</p> <p>9 I think that's a sensible part of putting across your</p> <p>10 case, provided you're not changing your case.</p> <p>11 If you take statutory recognition, for example, for</p> <p>12 trade unions, that was something they deeply disliked</p> <p>13 but it was something I was committed to. So there's two</p> <p>14 ways of putting that. You can say, you know: "Margaret</p> <p>15 Thatcher waged war on the trade unions and I'm</p> <p>16 determined to bring the unions back to their proper</p> <p>17 place of power." Right? Not very sensible to put it</p> <p>18 that way. Or you so say, "It should be the basic human</p> <p>19 rights of any individual to be a member of a trade union</p> <p>20 and, if there is sufficient support for union membership</p> <p>21 at the workplace, for them to be recognised. That's</p> <p>22 a matter of basic individual rights."</p> <p>23 So you could have put this in a way that was about</p> <p>24 collective power or you could have put it in a way that</p> <p>25 was about individual rights.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 65</p>	<p>1 MR JAY: Okay. 29 January 1997 now, Mr Blair. We're page 9</p> <p>2 of this bundle. We're still in Mr Campbell's diaries.</p> <p>3 Two-thirds of the way down the page, he says:</p> <p>4 "TB was due to see Murdoch on Monday and said it</p> <p>5 angered him that the meeting mattered but it did."</p> <p>6 I mean, first of all, has Mr Campbell accurately set</p> <p>7 out what you apparently told him?</p> <p>8 A. I think so, yes. That was my view all the way through,</p> <p>9 in a way, which is where I come to the -- what I think</p> <p>10 is -- how I would define the unhealthy part of this</p> <p>11 relationship, because -- I mean -- but -- yeah. I mean,</p> <p>12 I felt that it really did matter, and I still believe</p> <p>13 that, by the way, and that's not -- again, not simply a</p> <p>14 point with them, although they were probably the most</p> <p>15 powerful of the groups, but with all of them, and it</p> <p>16 mattered because the consequence of not getting it right</p> <p>17 was so severe, frankly.</p> <p>18 Q. But did it not rile with you in another sense, that</p> <p>19 maybe you felt that your policies had to be calibrated</p> <p>20 in some way to reflect the views of this very powerful</p> <p>21 institution?</p> <p>22 A. No, not -- not really that. Look, when I said to you at</p> <p>23 the very beginning that I took a strategic decision to</p> <p>24 manage these people, not confront them, let me make it</p> <p>25 clear, that wasn't -- you know, I am not saying I feared</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 67</p>
<p>1 My view is it's perfectly open to you to say: the</p> <p>2 best way of putting this case is to say it's about</p> <p>3 individual rights, and I'd already fought this whole</p> <p>4 thing within the Labour Party, getting rid of support</p> <p>5 for the closed shop and so on and so forth. So I had,</p> <p>6 you know, a certain amount of accumulated credibility on</p> <p>7 this issue, but of course you want to put your case</p> <p>8 across in the best way possible.</p> <p>9 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But that's no different -- is this</p> <p>10 fair? Would you say that is no different to any speech</p> <p>11 you might make to any group?</p> <p>12 A. Correct.</p> <p>13 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: You think precisely about what they</p> <p>14 want to hear and load bits that fit with your philosophy</p> <p>15 of what they want to hear into it but also the other</p> <p>16 bits?</p> <p>17 A. Yes, sir, that's absolutely right, and if I'm the first</p> <p>18 politician to do that, I'd be surprised. I think it's</p> <p>19 just a part of the art of politics.</p> <p>20 But what is important, I think, to emphasise -- and</p> <p>21 that's why I actually draw attention in my statement to</p> <p>22 the Guardian report, for example, of my speech the next</p> <p>23 day -- I actually did have in all the things that we</p> <p>24 were committed to they wouldn't like. I was also --</p> <p>25 because I was having to watch my other audience as well.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 66</p>	<p>1 them in the sense -- I mean, obviously I was aware of</p> <p>2 their power. I'm not saying I feared them in the sense</p> <p>3 that -- had I believed that that was the most important</p> <p>4 thing for the government to concentrate on, I would have</p> <p>5 done it.</p> <p>6 My issue is very simple about this, that I believe</p> <p>7 that had you decided to confront, everything else would</p> <p>8 have been pushed to the side, as I said earlier, and it</p> <p>9 would the have been in a huge battle with no guarantee</p> <p>10 of winning, and it's taken, frankly, what has happened</p> <p>11 in order to have this debate and for me to be sitting</p> <p>12 here and for this Inquiry to be taking place.</p> <p>13 So what I did in managing it -- I was very careful.</p> <p>14 So, for example, you know, in articles we wrote for the</p> <p>15 Sun before the 1997 election, you know, you stressed the</p> <p>16 bit of your European policy that was going to appeal,</p> <p>17 okay? But I didn't change the policy. And some of the</p> <p>18 stuff about, you know, in relation to Europe, we didn't</p> <p>19 do things because of the Murdoch media, that's not</p> <p>20 correct, actually. I was a pro-European when I came in</p> <p>21 and I left in the same vein. I did not change our</p> <p>22 positions on core policy issues at all.</p> <p>23 On the other hand, managing these forces was, you</p> <p>24 know, a major part of what you had to do and was</p> <p>25 difficult.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 68</p>

17 (Pages 65 to 68)

<p>1 Q. In your conversations with Mr Murdoch at about this 2 time, or perhaps later as well, when you were in power, 3 it's quite clear that the main subject matter was the 4 big political issues of the day, including, of course, 5 the euro, which was very much a concern to Mr Murdoch, 6 but did you also have conversations about issues such as 7 regulation or the BBC?</p> <p>8 A. No, not -- I mean, regulation -- he was basically 9 a deregulator rather than a regulator, so in general 10 terms -- I can't recall conversations about media 11 regulation per se. I mean, he didn't lobby me on media 12 stuff. That's not to say we weren't aware of the 13 positions their companies had, because we were, but as 14 I say, we decided more often against than in favour. 15 But the bulk of the conversation was about politics, and 16 Europe was a very large part of that because we had 17 a serious problem, because he had very, very strong 18 views on Europe and so did I.</p> <p>19 So, you know, that was a -- the conversations there 20 were really basically politics and about politics too. 21 I also used to find those interesting, because, for 22 example, on issues in relation to the United States, he 23 had as good an insight as anyone else I was talking to 24 at the time.</p> <p>25 Q. At what point exactly -- it may be difficult to define</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 69</p>	<p>1 Q. Or is it because over the course of time you got to know 2 each other better, and certainly by your third term, you 3 were, by then, pretty friendly?</p> <p>4 A. No, I think -- you know, all the way through I was -- 5 this was -- when you're -- you know, you're 6 Prime Minister and you're dealing with people, you have 7 power, obviously, as the Prime Minister. They have 8 power as the leader of a major media group. So it's 9 a relationship that's about power, and I find those 10 relationships not personal, actually. They're working, 11 to me. That doesn't mean to say you're not as charming 12 with people and get on with them as well as you can, but 13 as I say, I would never have become, for example, 14 godfather to one of the children on that basis.</p> <p>15 Now, what people see here, as a result of what has 16 happened and the appalling things that happened, is one 17 aspect of Rupert Murdoch and his media interests here in 18 this country. So once you leave office, that's -- 19 that's not the issue any more. So it can become 20 different, and frankly, healthier.</p> <p>21 Q. Mrs Brooks, if I can move to her, was she someone who 22 exercised power, in your view, albeit in a very 23 different way?</p> <p>24 A. Rebekah Brooks was obviously important because she was 25 the editor of the Sun and I would be interacting</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 71</p>
<p>1 a moment -- did a close friendship develop between the 2 two of you?</p> <p>3 A. This would be -- you know, I would describe my 4 relationship with him as a working relationship until 5 after I left office. So I got to -- I know there been 6 all this stuff about me being godfather to one of his 7 children. I would never have become a godfather to his 8 child on the basis of my relationship with him in 9 office. But after I left, I got to know him better, and 10 frankly, the relationship can be a lot easier and 11 better, and his family.</p> <p>12 So, you know, now it's different and it's not the 13 same -- I don't feel the same pressures. So you're able 14 to have a relationship in a way that also -- because 15 there are lots of other things that he's involved in and 16 does that are of -- you know, that are interesting and 17 don't involve issues to do with British politics, when 18 I was the Prime Minister and you were in a relationship 19 that, as I say, was a working relationship but it also 20 had this fairly acute tension at the heart of it.</p> <p>21 Q. Is it because the elimination of the powerful 22 undercurrents, which you refer to stopping in June 2007, 23 made it possible to have a different sort of 24 relationship; is that it?</p> <p>25 A. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, that's exactly it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 70</p>	<p>1 reasonably often with them. But as I think I said to 2 you earlier, there was no doubt in my mind though was 3 the key decision-maker. At that point, at any rate. It 4 may have changed when she took over from Les Hinton.</p> <p>5 Q. But did she not exercise power in the sense that she 6 was, as it were, the centre of a network and also, on 7 occasion, capable of administering personal attacks?</p> <p>8 A. Not -- I mean, look, so far as I was concerned, you 9 know -- centre of a network? I mean, I think, you know, 10 for example, going to social occasions at which she 11 would be part of it, I don't think there were very many 12 of those when I was there. Indeed, again, I probably 13 got to know her better after I left office.</p> <p>14 On the attack side, look, let me just make one thing 15 absolutely clear: I did never and would never have asked 16 her or indeed anybody else to conduct attacks on 17 individuals. Despite what people may think and some of 18 the stuff that's been written, I absolutely hate that 19 type of politics and did not engage in it.</p> <p>20 Q. Her statement makes it clear, paragraphs 53 and 54 at 21 page 02580, which is under tab 17 in our bundle -- she 22 says a number of things:</p> <p>23 "I've had many formal, informal and social meetings 24 with him, some which I've been able to detail. We also 25 spoke on the telephone on a variety of issues.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 72</p>

18 (Pages 69 to 72)

<p>1 Tony Blair, his senior Cabinet advisers and press 2 secretaries were a constant presence in my life for many 3 years." 4 Is that a fair encapsulation of the position, 5 Mr Blair? 6 A. Yeah, I mean, if you take the whole of the relationships 7 within government, but then I think you'd say that, 8 probably, to be fair, about most of the senior political 9 media people. 10 Q. Did she have ready access to you and your senior Cabinet 11 effectively whenever she wanted it? 12 A. I don't know whenever she wanted it, but if she was -- 13 if there was an issue that concerned her -- I mean, 14 I don't know whether she would necessarily have come on 15 to me about it, but I should imagine most -- most 16 Cabinet ministers will take the call of an editor of 17 a major newspaper. I'd be surprised if they didn't. 18 And I don't think per se there's anything wrong in that 19 and, you know, on certain occasions I would have. But 20 I think, again, you just have to be careful of 21 distinguishing what is inevitable from what is wrong. 22 I would say, you know -- back in the 60s, would that not 23 have been the case? Even the 50s? I don't know. But 24 I would be surprised if the editor of a major newspaper 25 wanted to speak to a Cabinet Minister, they didn't -- Page 73</p>	<p>1 I nearly lost the vote and then would have had to have 2 resigned, or academy schools -- I mean, interacting with 3 them would have been important on these issues. 4 Now -- that's why I'm trying to use my words very 5 carefully here. Where I would I would agree with you, 6 though, sir, is -- where it would sort of step over the 7 line, in a sense, would be that it became incredibly 8 important to have this support because otherwise you 9 literally couldn't get your message across at all. So 10 that's -- and that comes back to what I'm trying to 11 identify here as the central issue for the politicians. 12 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I quite understand. It was because 13 of your phrase, "a major part of what you had to do and 14 was difficult". I just wondered whether that increased 15 or diminished in your period in office? 16 A. Funnily enough, I think probably in one sense -- look, 17 in my last three or four years -- it's what I always say 18 to people about the problem you have as a political 19 leader, that you begin at your least capable and most 20 popular, and you end at your least popular and most 21 capable, and frankly, actually, towards the end, in 22 a way, by then, I had just decided I was going to do 23 what I thought was right. 24 So I would say media managing, probably I did more 25 in my first bit than my last bit. But having said that, Page 75</p>
<p>1 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I'm not sure it's necessarily either 2 inevitable or wrong, whether there isn't some other 3 issue. Something you said just a few moments ago, which 4 actually chimes a little bit with this question Mr Jay 5 is asking, was this: 6 "Managing these forces [that's of the press] was 7 a major part of what you had to do and was difficult." 8 One of the questions which I would like to know the 9 answer to is whether, at the beginning, in the middle, 10 at the end of your period, managing the press was 11 actually interfering with the time that you had 12 available to solve the most important questions that you 13 had to solve, and if so, what can be done about that? 14 Now, I appreciate the second half is a much more 15 difficult question. 16 A. No, I wouldn't say it was ever -- look, most of these 17 calls were pretty short. So mean -- no, it definitely 18 wouldn't be the case that I was so busy dealing with the 19 media I couldn't focus on the issues of the day. 20 What is more, I would say that sort of managing the 21 media inevitably is a part of trying to manage -- if 22 you're trying to put through, for example, let's say 23 tuition fees, which was the single thing that was 24 probably most difficult in terms of votes in the House 25 of Commons for me as Prime Minister and the thing where Page 74</p>	<p>1 no, I would describe -- you know, having regard to the 2 media was a major factor, but maybe it's always going to 3 be that. That's why I'd been -- you know, if you were 4 looking back in time, I can't believe there's been prime 5 ministers who didn't take that as a major are part of 6 what they do. 7 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Except that -- and it may be that 8 Mr Jay will come onto this -- you took the decision that 9 you needed somebody to direct your communications who 10 had a real background in tabloid journalism and took the 11 responsibilities very seriously and very effectively, 12 and -- 13 A. Sure. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: -- now we see that political leaders 15 generally appear to have followed the same sort of 16 pattern. 17 A. Yes, that's an absolutely correct point. I mean, look, 18 what I could see developing -- and by the way, this is 19 even more so today. You have 24-hour-a-day, 20 seven-days-a-week media. You have stories -- the thing 21 that's changed -- and I noticed this, by the way, around 22 the world; this is not a specific British problem -- is 23 the interaction between social media and conventional 24 media today means that you get what used to be 25 a building wave of opinion, which, if you intervened in Page 76</p>

<p>1 the right way, you could maybe -- it would then ebb 2 again. It now reaches tsunami force within hours 3 sometimes, days certainly, and can capsize a -- can 4 literally wash a government away. You see this around 5 the world. 6 So for example, I think when you're analysing these 7 Arab revolutions, which in the work I do now I see quite 8 closely, I would say social media is an absolutely 9 integral part of what has happened there. I would say 10 today -- absolutely, you're right. Today, this whole 11 issue of managing the media is far more difficult and 12 far more important because -- I mean, this is not 13 a criticism; it's just a fact. The fact is it occurs in 14 a way and with an intensity that, in the old days, 15 wouldn't have happened. 16 This is why I used to say to people, when they used 17 so say, "Your Cabinet meetings don't last long 18 enough" -- and I used to always give the example that 19 Roy Jenkins used to give me back in the 60s, where 20 a Cabinet decision would go on for two days and at the 21 end of it they would have a show of hands around the 22 time. By the time I became Prime Minister, if a Cabinet 23 meeting went on for two days -- I mean, forget it. It 24 would have been total crisis mode for the whole of the 25 government. And if I'd said to them: "Right, we're Page 77</p>	<p>1 whatever she said about Gordon Brown and basically was 2 supportive of him taking over, with me at any rate. 3 No -- I mean, look, they were about politics in a pretty 4 general way. 5 As I say, so far as -- at that point, at any rate, 6 for the Murdoch press, I mean, I had my own relationship 7 with Rupert Murdoch and he was the key decision-maker. 8 Q. What did you feel about some of her campaigns, in 9 particular Sarah's Law? Did that appeal to you or not? 10 A. No, I was pretty ambivalent about that, as I think 11 I said to her at the time. I mean, I understood why she 12 thought it was a big problem but I thought particularly 13 the way -- the trouble with any of these campaigns is 14 that if you're not careful, the way they're conducted 15 ends up getting out of hand. 16 Q. Do you feel this one did? 17 A. Yeah. 18 Q. What about some of the personal attacks in the Sun 19 against some of your colleagues? 20 A. My attitude to that throughout was always to say -- 21 I mean, not merely to her but to anybody else -- I mean, 22 I didn't like it, I don't like it, I think it's not the 23 right way to conduct politics, but again, to be frank, 24 this was not a matter simply for the Sun. I mean, you 25 could spread that across the media piece. Page 79</p>
<p>1 going to have a show of hands now", who had voted which 2 way and how would have been out within 30 seconds and 3 you would have -- all I'm saying is the business of 4 politics -- part of the problem here, which is why this 5 is the right moment to assess what can be done, is the 6 business of politics has become acutely more difficult, 7 not the fault of either politicians or media, but 8 because the system within which you operate, the 9 technology that's available, the way it works today is 10 just fundamentally different. 11 And this is a problem, by the way -- you know, this 12 is a problem that has arisen here in a particular way 13 and this is why we have this Inquiry, but I tell you, 14 you could talk to any leader in the democratic world 15 today and they would say to you this is a major question 16 for them, as to how they have the right interaction with 17 the media in a world that is just light years away from 18 what we grew up with. 19 MR JAY: Your informal contacts with Mrs Brooks, or at least 20 what she refers to, did many of those have to do with 21 her personal support for you in the context of what she 22 describes as deepening hostility between you and 23 Mr Brown? 24 A. I've read that in her evidence. Actually, to be fair to 25 her, she was, you know, pretty cautious, actually, about Page 78</p>	<p>1 Q. Did there come a point, as with Mr Murdoch, I suppose, 2 that you developed a friendship with her? 3 A. Yes, for Rebekah Wade, or Rebekah Brooks as she became, 4 again, probably closer once I left office, when again 5 you were free from the constraints and when it wasn't 6 a relationship that, as it were, is about the power 7 relationship. 8 Q. Did you offer her any messages of support in July of 9 last year? 10 A. I -- you know, I'm somebody who doesn't believe in being 11 a fairweather friend, and certainly I said I was very 12 sorry for what had happened to her and, you know, 13 I remain -- obviously whatever has happened -- I don't 14 know anything about the facts of the particular case, 15 but I have been or seen people go through these 16 situations and I know what it's like. 17 Q. Can I look at some specific case studies, I suppose, 18 now. The first one is paragraph 16 of your statement, 19 Mr Blair, where you deal with the issue of change of 20 policy on media ownership between 1994 and 1997. 21 I think you agree that there was a change of policy. 22 Had you kept to the original policy, it would have been 23 a problem for the Murdoch press, but then you say there 24 were sound, objective reasons for changing it. Is that 25 a fair summary of your evidence? Page 80</p>

20 (Pages 77 to 80)

<p>1 A. Yes, absolutely.</p> <p>2 Q. Can I ask you, though, what were then the sound</p> <p>3 objective reasons for changing the policy?</p> <p>4 A. They were twofold. First of all, I didn't and don't</p> <p>5 believe the issue of the ownership is what is important.</p> <p>6 In other words, I think that -- and I thought this</p> <p>7 particularly as we get later to the 2003 Communications</p> <p>8 Act. I think prejudices against foreign owners or</p> <p>9 saying this particular owner we like or we don't like --</p> <p>10 I think it's better to deal with at least issues on the</p> <p>11 basis of competition for the concentration of media</p> <p>12 ownership and if you don't change the culture or the</p> <p>13 rules, then you won't actually improve the situation.</p> <p>14 And also, as I said to you earlier, I mean, I'd</p> <p>15 taken the view I was not going to have the Labour Party</p> <p>16 coming back into power after 18 years with a programme</p> <p>17 of change for the country and having the centrepiece of</p> <p>18 the programme being issues to do with media ownership.</p> <p>19 I thought that would have been a distraction and wrong.</p> <p>20 Q. I think it was Mr Lance Price who has expressed the view</p> <p>21 that the cross-media ownership policy was quietly</p> <p>22 dropped within six months of the Hayman Island trip,</p> <p>23 which was in July 1995. Is that a fair assessment or</p> <p>24 not?</p> <p>25 A. No, it's not a fair assessment. The fact is I was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 81</p>	<p>1 comes back to my strategic decision but that's another</p> <p>2 topic.</p> <p>3 Q. Policy in the immediate run-up to the 1997 election.</p> <p>4 First of all, Mr Campbell's diaries, page 10 of your</p> <p>5 bundle, the entry for 11 March 1997, where Mr Hall, then</p> <p>6 the editor of the News of the World, called to say there</p> <p>7 had been a sea change in Les Hinton's view:</p> <p>8 "There was definitely movement to us and their big</p> <p>9 fear was more unions than Europe but his view was</p> <p>10 Murdoch was definitely going to back us."</p> <p>11 Do you remember that sort of message being</p> <p>12 communicated to you?</p> <p>13 A. I do actually remember Alastair telling me about his</p> <p>14 conversation with Phil Hall, yeah, which is not to say</p> <p>15 that he knew, by the way, Phil, I don't think, but --</p> <p>16 you know, by then, by the way -- this is March 1997,</p> <p>17 I think.</p> <p>18 Q. It is.</p> <p>19 A. So by then, I think, I would have been surprised</p> <p>20 actually if they hadn't come out and backed us.</p> <p>21 Q. Is the general point being made an accurate one, that</p> <p>22 their big fear was more unions than Europe?</p> <p>23 A. I think probably that was true, actually. I mean, look,</p> <p>24 they'd been through all this Wapping business, so the</p> <p>25 unions weren't merely a theoretical issue; it was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 83</p>
<p>1 absolutely clear we weren't going to put this in the</p> <p>2 Labour Party programme. If you'd done that, you would</p> <p>3 have started off your time in government concentrating</p> <p>4 on the media, and I don't actually recall at the time</p> <p>5 many people arguing very fiercely in order to keep it</p> <p>6 there.</p> <p>7 Q. Do you know exactly when this change of policy arose?</p> <p>8 A. I don't. I mean, I can try and find out from the Labour</p> <p>9 Party policy people at the time.</p> <p>10 Q. If Mr Price is right -- he may be wrong about cause and</p> <p>11 effect -- we're sort of at the back end of 1995, early</p> <p>12 1996. Could that be right?</p> <p>13 A. I don't know. I have to go and check it. I mean, don't</p> <p>14 let me -- on the other hand, as I say in my statement,</p> <p>15 had we kept that, it would definitely have been</p> <p>16 a problem with the Murdoch media group in particular,</p> <p>17 that's for sure, but I didn't think it was the right</p> <p>18 policy anyway, so, you know -- and I think really</p> <p>19 throughout my -- and also at the beginning part of my</p> <p>20 time in office, I was pretty much on the self-regulation</p> <p>21 side of the market. I came to a different view at</p> <p>22 a later stage. So in a way, the policy that we pursued</p> <p>23 then was consistent with the policy we first pursued in</p> <p>24 government.</p> <p>25 Now, had you decided to take all of that on, it</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 82</p>	<p>1 a major practical issue. He felt that -- to some</p> <p>2 extent, rightly, that if I hadn't been able to overcome</p> <p>3 that union opposition, he would never have been able to</p> <p>4 save the Times and operate in the country, so it was</p> <p>5 obviously going to be a big issue for them.</p> <p>6 But my position on the unions -- let me make it</p> <p>7 absolutely clear -- was because I believed in it. So we</p> <p>8 introduced a minimum wage, equal rights for part-time</p> <p>9 workers. We introduced statutory recognition. We were</p> <p>10 going to introduce individual rights, but I was</p> <p>11 determined -- and this was a matter of conviction, not</p> <p>12 because Rupert Murdoch or anyone else believed in it --</p> <p>13 that we were not going to reverse the key principles of</p> <p>14 the Thatcher legislation, and I did that for reasons</p> <p>15 because I thought it was right.</p> <p>16 Q. There's a later diary entry, page 11 of this bundle.</p> <p>17 We're a few days later, so I don't have the exact date,</p> <p>18 although we know the first piece in the Sun was 17 March</p> <p>19 1997. Do you remember that one?</p> <p>20 A. Yes.</p> <p>21 Q. The second piece was 17 April 1997. At the top of our</p> <p>22 page 11, Mr Campbell notes that:</p> <p>23 "Meanwhile, I call Stuart Higgins as agreed and he</p> <p>24 said, clearly having spoken to Murdoch, that if we gave</p> <p>25 them a piece on Europe saying the kind of things TB had</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 84</p>

21 (Pages 81 to 84)

<p>1 said last time they met, they'd put it on the front. 2 I spoke to TB and after we chewed it over, we agreed to 3 go for it. TB felt it could be the last thing needed to 4 swing the Sun around." 5 Pausing there, is that accurate or not? 6 A. Yeah, that's accurate. 7 Q. "We agreed it was important not to change in any sense 8 the policy, but in turn to allow them to put over the 9 message that TB was not some kind of caricature euro 10 fanatic." 11 So did you feel it was more a sense of rhetoric and 12 tone than substance, or do you feel that the distinction 13 between those two is sometimes a little bit difficult to 14 see? 15 A. No, I think in this instance, it was very much on that 16 basis. That's why I talk about the difference between 17 managing them and conceding on policy. I didn't concede 18 on policy at all. I remained, throughout my time as 19 Prime Minister, pro-European. The fact is we had 20 a commitment for a referendum. If we went -- I think it 21 was for the single currency -- it was a referendum on 22 the single currency was part of our five pledges, and it 23 was important also, by the way, to counter the fact that 24 people thought you might be just for some sort of 25 European superstate or so on, which isn't my position.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 85</p>	<p>1 actually with modern politics -- and I say this not as 2 a criticism of the media -- is that my experience of the 3 reporting of these events is that you can have 1,000 4 people in a room and someone gets up and shouts or 5 throws something. That's the news. The other 999 might 6 as well not have bothered turning up. 7 But anyway, we were back in -- 8 MR JAY: We were back in 1997. 9 A. Right. 10 Q. The line in the diaries, though, Mr Blair: 11 "It was fantastically irritating on one level that 12 we had to go through these kinds of routine, but with an 13 election looming, we would be daft not to try it." 14 Was part of the irritation a sense that you were 15 having to tack perhaps a little bit too close to the 16 wind in a way in which you would not otherwise have been 17 minded to do? 18 A. You know, throughout you will find references to a level 19 of discomfort or feeling, you know, uncomfortable about 20 the fact that you had to make this persuasion a big part 21 of what you were doing. But no, I don't -- I think we 22 were on the right side of the line, and, you know, we -- 23 this was something where, on many areas of policy, you 24 might have an issue with particular papers and 25 particular ways. What I was always anxious to do -- and</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 87</p>
<p>1 So this allowed us -- we were choosing the rhetoric 2 carefully, but the substance -- no, we didn't change the 3 substance of the policy, and I think in this instance, 4 by the way, I think the distinction between the two is 5 pretty clear. 6 Q. I think Mr Campbell told us that the commitment to 7 referendum on the euro was not part of the five pledges 8 but I think it was nonetheless Labour Party policy at 9 this stage. But we can check his evidence on that. 10 A. I thought it was part of the five, but anyway. Okay, we 11 should check it. 12 (Interruption in proceedings) 13 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I'm sorry for that, Mr Blair. I'd 14 like to find out how this gentleman managed to access 15 the court through what is supposed to be a secure 16 corridor. I'll have an investigation undertaken about 17 that immediately. I apologise. 18 A. That's fine. Can I just say, actually, on the record, 19 what he said about Iraq and JP Morgan is completely and 20 totally untrue. I have never had a discussion with them 21 about that or any relationship between them and Iraq. 22 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: You're entitled to say what you want, 23 but you should not feel it necessary to answer somebody 24 else's points. 25 A. No, I appreciate that, but part of the difficulty</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 86</p>	<p>1 by the way, by the end even more so than at the 2 beginning -- was to make sure that what we did was to 3 steer the right side of that line and never yield on the 4 policy. 5 So you know, my -- obviously, it's for others to 6 judge on this, but I was very careful all the way 7 through. I was not going to change policy because of 8 this media power, but I did have to manage them. 9 Q. There's some evidence that after the election, you wrote 10 a personal note to Mr Higgins, who was then editor of 11 the Sun, saying, "You really did make a difference." Do 12 you remember doing that? 13 A. I don't specifically, but it's perfectly possible I did, 14 and, you know, frankly, it did make a difference. 15 Q. You feel it impacted on the scale of your majority or 16 what? 17 A. I mean, again, I don't think there's anything 18 particularly wrong with this. I thought it made 19 a difference that the Financial Times supported us. 20 What was one of the things I was trying to do? I was 21 trying to move Labour to a position where it said, "We 22 are not going to give any special favours to trade 23 unions. We're a pro-business party as well as 24 supporting individual rights for workers." 25 The Financial Times, I think in 1992 they didn't</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 88</p>

22 (Pages 85 to 88)

<p>1 support the Labour Party. Or maybe they did. I can't 2 remember. Anyway, for me it was important to get them 3 on board. So again, in that way, I don't think there 4 was anything wrong in that or surprising. If a major 5 newspaper comes on side, particularly one that's been 6 hostile, I think it makes a difference. I don't think 7 there's anything wrong in that per se.</p> <p>8 Q. The support of the Financial Times, although no doubt 9 important as a matter of perception, is unlikely to 10 impact at all on anybody's voting habits, to put it 11 bluntly. But weren't you saying in relation the Sun it 12 made a difference because it might have impacted on the 13 way they voted?</p> <p>14 A. Of course. I mean, I think their support -- it's hard 15 to quantify this, but of course their support would make 16 a difference.</p> <p>17 Actually, one of my constant strategic discussions 18 with my folk was I actually think it did make 19 a difference for us, with voters, that business was -- 20 a significant part of business was on side. I mean, 21 I was the first Labour leader to be able to go to 22 a launch of a manifesto and have a whole lot of business 23 people sitting alongside us and I still believe, for 24 people on my side of the political fence, that if you 25 don't have substantial business support, it's hard to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 89</p>	<p>1 that said we were going to repeal all this Conservative 2 legislation, which I thought was not simply foolish 3 politically for us; I thought it was wrong. You know, 4 I went through all those campaigns, and in the end 5 I thought the closed shop, for example, was wrong as 6 a matter of principle. I still do. I didn't need 7 Rupert Murdoch or anyone else to tell me about that.</p> <p>8 Now, it's true that had we had a different position, 9 then I think that would have been a big problem with 10 their newspapers but we didn't take the position for 11 that reason. It was a position I believed in and was 12 for me a very, very important part of New Labour.</p> <p>13 Q. And the subsidiary question I've been asked to put: was 14 it not part of this agreement that whilst you insisted 15 that a statutory recognition procedure should be 16 introduced, he insisted -- that's Mr Murdoch -- that 17 there should be a clause within it which specifically 18 enabled the existence of a non-independent staff 19 association like NISA to block an application for 20 recognition by an independent trade union at 21 a News International title?</p> <p>22 A. No. So this was -- I understand why these sort of 23 conspiracy theories arise but it's not as if my position 24 on unions and so on was a matter of great surprise. It 25 was actually, for me, a very, very strong article of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 91</p>
<p>1 win the economic argument. So I think these things 2 actually do have an impact, but anyway, that's my 3 business, not yours.</p> <p>4 Q. I've been asked to put to you some questions in relation 5 to the issue of union reform. We saw that hinted at in 6 one of the extracts I've recently drawn to your 7 attention and the questions are these: did you reach an 8 understanding with Rupert Murdoch, after you became 9 leader of the Labour Party but before you became 10 Prime Minister, that you would not repeal the 11 constraints imposed on trade unions by the various Trade 12 Unions Acts and associated legislation passed in the 13 Thatcher area? And the quid pro quo, I suppose, is that 14 his papers would endorse your election.</p> <p>15 A. No, this was a position I took because I believed in it 16 and actually it was completely consistent with the 17 positions I'd taken when I was employment spokesman of 18 the Labour Party.</p> <p>19 Q. I put to Mr Murdoch a piece in the Times -- I think it 20 was 31 March 1997 -- which indicated your position, but 21 cause and effect here is completely disassociated; is 22 that it?</p> <p>23 A. Yeah, because my view was one of the essential things 24 Labour had to do was it had to -- we were dogged 25 throughout the '83, '87, 1992 elections with a position</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 90</p>	<p>1 belief. I think trade unions are a very important part 2 of a modern democratic society, but -- you know, it's 3 interesting, actually. Their argument through the 60s 4 and the 70s -- and I grew up with this argument -- was 5 that they should not be subject to legal constraint, you 6 know, that this was an interference with the democratic 7 principles of trade unionism. And as time went on, 8 I just came to the view that you couldn't argue that. 9 You know, they had power. They should be subject to 10 some form of legal framework.</p> <p>11 So this was -- my view of this was because 12 I genuinely believed these positions for the Labour 13 Party should change and had to change.</p> <p>14 Q. Lord Mandelson, in his evidence, drew a neat analogy 15 between what he described as the powers of the unions of 16 old and the modern power of the press. Do you see that 17 as a neat analogy or as a mismatch?</p> <p>18 A. I think some of the arguments are a little, to me, 19 somewhat the same, in the sense that I remember at the 20 time people used to argue, within the trade union 21 movement, that -- just this whole concept that someone 22 else could tell them, you know: "Here are certain 23 standards" was wrong, so I suppose there was a certain 24 reflection of that, but I suppose you can take that 25 analogy too far quite quickly.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 92</p>

23 (Pages 89 to 92)

<p>1 Q. Can I move on to the Prodi intervention in 1998. We've 2 received already quite a lot of evidence about that. 3 Can I throw into the melting pot another extract from 4 Mr Mullins' diary, page 17 of our bundle. 5 A. Yes. 6 Q. We're in March 1998. Do you see the second 7 paragraph there: 8 "Murdoch came up again at the Parliamentary 9 committee. The papers are full of stories alleged that 10 the man [that's you, of course] has been ringing up the 11 Italian Prime Minister on Murdoch's behalf. I asked, 12 one, who initiated the call to Prodi, and two, what is 13 our relationship with Murdoch? The man was visibly 14 irritated. 'I don't reveal the content of private 15 conversations,' he said, testily. I replied I just 16 wanted to say who initiated it. He seemed to say it was 17 Prodi, adding, 'The story in today's Telegraph is a load 18 of balls.' Then he relaxed and said, 'My relationship 19 with Murdoch is no different from that with any other 20 newspaper proprietor. I love them all equally.' He 21 said forcefully --" 22 A. A touch of irony, I'd just like to emphasise in that 23 one. 24 Q. I certainly detected the irony but whether I delivered 25 it in quite the right tone, probably not, in my desire</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 93</p>	<p>1 minutes ended up occupying days and weeks of time. 2 Q. So is this your point: that this is an example of 3 a conspiracy theory which really has developed like 4 turvey(?) out of a story which had no validity? 5 A. Absolutely, and you know, as I said, when you come to 6 how we decide media policy -- now, it's correct that 7 what we decided not to do was to do a big media, you 8 know, regulation and so on, but in respect of the 9 specific issues that came up along the way, we 10 decided -- as I say, I think more of them against than 11 in favour. I say that in my statement and I wasn't 12 saying whether it was a good idea he bought Mediaset or 13 not. I mean, all I was doing was finding out whether 14 a foreign owner would be welcome or not welcome. 15 Q. The answer, I think, was not welcome, and Mr Murdoch 16 didn't press the matter at that point? 17 A. Yeah. 18 Q. Is that it? 19 A. Yeah. I don't think that's unreasonable for that to be 20 asked or -- you know, as I say, if another media group 21 had been interested in a possible acquisition, I would 22 have done the same. 23 Q. Can I deal with perhaps an issue of more substance. The 24 Human Rights Act, Mr Blair, which was one, I suppose, of 25 the -- certainly the most significant achievements of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 95</p>
<p>1 to maintain impartiality throughout. But in terms of 2 the gist of your conversation with Mr Mullins, is this 3 a fair account or not? 4 A. Yeah. I mean, again, I can't honestly remember this, 5 but it probably sounds to me about right, and as I think 6 I say in my statement the call was initiated from Romano 7 Prodi, and basically I was -- raised the issue of the -- 8 of whether the idea of having someone from the outside 9 come and own part of Mediaset would be resented or not. 10 He gave me an answer and I can't remember how it was 11 relayed back, but I'm sure it was. 12 But my point is I would have done that for anyone 13 with substantial British interests. I would have done 14 that if another media group had asked me to do it. 15 Q. Mr Campbell's account, his diary entry for 1 April 1998, 16 page 19, the end of the first paragraph for that date: 17 "TB said he didn't fear them coming at him about me 18 but about the relationship with Murdoch and he didn't 19 fancy a sustained set of questions about whether Murdoch 20 lobbied him." 21 Again, is that an accurate account by Mr Campbell of 22 your then state of mind? 23 A. Yeah, because what you knew, as indeed turned out to be 24 the case, is that what was an intervention, which 25 I think was perfectly justified, that lasted about two</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 94</p>	<p>1 your first term and one which you'd been committed to in 2 opposition for some significant period of time, and so 3 therefore a lot of time was devoted to it. 4 Was it the position that News International -- 5 I suppose together with everybody else -- were lobbying 6 for complete press immunity from the Human Rights Act? 7 A. Yes, that's right. They wanted no suggestion that you 8 would move outside the bounds of the PCC and 9 self-regulation. 10 Q. And were you generally supportive of that position? 11 A. Yes, that was -- I mean, my -- my view was that if you 12 were to deal with this, you had to deal with it head on, 13 as it were, not through the Human Rights Act, which 14 would be a sort of side way of dealing with it. 15 Also, at that time, I think I'm right in saying it 16 was Lord Wakeham who was head of the PCC, who was 17 something actually I thought was doing quite a good job 18 of that, and the PCC were pretty fierce on this, on 19 behalf the whole of the media, really, not any one 20 particular part of it. 21 Q. Was the position reached that following, if I can put it 22 in these terms, pressure from Lord Irvine -- of course 23 then your Lord Chancellor, who I think was responsible 24 for piloting the act through Parliament generally, 25 certainly of course through the Lords -- that he</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 96</p>

24 (Pages 93 to 96)

<p>1 persuaded you that your position was incorrect and we 2 ended up with a compromise, which we see in the form of 3 Section 12 of the Act? 4 A. That's right. 5 Q. In terms, though, of what your position was, what was 6 the problem in allowing a privacy law to develop 7 incrementally through Article 8, which is what would 8 have happened -- indeed has happened in any event -- 9 with the introduction of the Act in the form in which we 10 now see it? 11 A. As I say, I felt we should still be with the 12 self-regulation argument, and I knew that we were going 13 to have quite a big battle over it if we changed that 14 position. In the end, we did come to a compromise, and 15 I think that compromise was perfectly sensible, by the 16 way. 17 But at that time -- when were we there? 1998? You 18 know, we'd taken a position in favour of 19 self-regulation. That was the position. But I felt -- 20 you know, Derry was making very strong arguments about 21 this, felt very strongly about it, and had I absolutely 22 felt very strongly about my position, I would have not 23 wanted the compromise. But in the end I thought -- 24 I listened to him and thought this is a way through 25 this.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 97</p>	<p>1 Princess Diana's death and everything which existed at 2 that stage, was that it was appropriate to have a system 3 whereby Article 8 and Article 10 would be balanced and 4 the privacy law would develop in that way, which is what 5 has occurred. 6 A. Yes, absolutely, and look, that's the point that Derry 7 made and very strongly and in the end prevailed. The 8 alternative argument -- it was more a political 9 argument. After events surrounding Princess Diana's 10 death, there was actually a tougher attitude then taken, 11 I think, by the PCC for a time and so on. I think 12 people felt that Lord Wakeham was a more credible 13 chairman of the PCC and all of that, but, you know, it 14 was a political question. I'm not sure I devoted a vast 15 amount of time to this one, but, no, the point you make 16 is a perfectly reasonable one and probably if this thing 17 had cropped up in 2006, not 1998, I would have gone 18 along with the original compromise at the beginning. 19 Q. I move forward in time to 2001, and your second election 20 victory. Mr Campbell's diaries again, page 20. The 21 bottom of page 21. 30 October, so this must be the year 22 2000. The bottom of the page: 23 "TB saw Murdoch and Irwin Stelzer (Murdoch adviser). 24 He had asked them outright whether they were going to 25 back us. Murdoch said the Tories were unelectable and Page 99</p>
<p>1 Q. Although the development of a privacy law through the 2 gateway of Article 8 would be entirely consistent with 3 self-regulation, wouldn't it? 4 A. Yeah. It's not what they at the time felt at the time. 5 I mean, my recollection of this was that the PCC itself 6 was really the lobbying organ on this one. 7 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Well, what do you think about that? 8 You may be right, but what do you think about the idea 9 that the PCC is actually acting as a lobby -- 10 A. Yeah. 11 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: -- rather than doing the job which 12 might have been thought that it should be doing in the 13 light of Calcutt, which was to provide a mechanism of 14 redress? 15 A. That's a good point. I suppose, look, they felt -- you 16 know, they were defending their own position as the 17 custodians of press standards. But, yeah, I mean 18 I think that's a perfectly reasonable point. 19 MR JAY: But your original position, in line with the press 20 position, which would have placed the press, as it were, 21 outside the Human Rights Act, would certainly have 22 removed all the force of Article 8 and arguably would 23 have given force for the common law position, which is 24 reflected in Article 10. Why was there a policy issue 25 here? Surely the position, particularly after Page 98</p>	<p>1 that was that. TB seemed to take it as face value." 2 Is this an accurate account or not? 3 A. Yes, I think that would be an accurate account. 4 Q. So we do have you asking a direct and explicit question 5 of Mr Murdoch, and getting a blunt answer, don't we? 6 A. Yes. I mean, he wouldn't -- you know, I don't think it 7 was -- you know, with other media people, I would have 8 probably have also asked them what their attitude was 9 going to be. Again, I don't see any -- they were going 10 to make a decision about it, so why not ask them? 11 Q. Was this the only occasion in which you were so 12 outright, to use Mr Campbell's phrase, with Mr Murdoch, 13 or do you think there were others? 14 A. No, I think probably before the 2005 election I would 15 have asked -- I don't actually recall that as well as 16 I recall this, partly because Alastair's diary brings it 17 all back, as it were, but I have no doubt I would have, 18 in effect. Even if I didn't full on, I would have 19 wanted to know what the situation is. 20 But as I say, I don't think that's -- you know, 21 I think I would have done that with any major group that 22 I thought where there was a possibility of securing 23 support. 24 Q. Obviously for many newspaper groups there's no point 25 asking the question because you know what the answer's Page 100</p>

25 (Pages 97 to 100)

1 going to be.
 2 **A. Right.**
 3 Q. But it's just in the cases where they might be some
 4 doubt but --
 5 **A. I mean, I can't recall ever doing this specifically with**
 6 **other groups, but, you know, there was a possibility,**
 7 **for example, the Guardian might have backed the Liberal**
 8 **Democrats, or the Financial Times might have backed**
 9 **someone else. I can't recall the precise conversations**
 10 **I had, but I don't -- I don't think there's anything**
 11 **wrong with asking them, you know, whether they're going**
 12 **to support you or not. What's obviously different is if**
 13 **you're conditioning that in some way.**
 14 Q. Mr Campbell gave evidence that over the period
 15 2002/2003 -- this is tab 3 of the big file -- he gave
 16 his evidence on this point on 14 May. It's page 36 of
 17 the transcript.
 18 **A. Right. 36?**
 19 Q. Yes. I'm afraid there are two transcripts under tab 3.
 20 The one from 14 May is the one I invite to your
 21 attention.
 22 **A. Okay. Yes.**
 23 Q. He's suggesting that in or about 2002 there started to
 24 be internal discussions about putting the PCC on
 25 a statutory basis, creating a right of reply, et cetera.

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1 First of all, is he right about that?
 2 **A. Yes. There was a -- look, there was a big debate going**
 3 **on with the people around me, some of whom felt very**
 4 **strongly -- Jonathan was one, Alastair was another --**
 5 **that we should take this issue on. I mean, I was**
 6 **reluctant, for the reasons I give. So -- I mean, he**
 7 **says here that he -- I think you're quoting from**
 8 **Jonathan Powell, aren't you?**
 9 Q. I am, yes.
 10 **A. Yes. Yeah. I mean, I remember that discussion taking**
 11 **place and I think some work was done on it, but I mean,**
 12 **this never got to the stage where I was anywhere near**
 13 **taking a different decision to the one I'd taken up**
 14 **then.**
 15 Q. I suppose you reached the point in your -- this was your
 16 second term. Some would say you were at the zenith of
 17 your power, really. Of course, the situation may or may
 18 not have changed later. It was the opportunity insofar
 19 as there ever was one. Is that fair or not?
 20 **A. Yes. Look, some people say, "You could have done it**
 21 **straight after 1997. You'd just won this landslide**
 22 **victory. That would have been a chance." And some**
 23 **people say, "After everything that happened after the**
 24 **death of Princess Diana, that would have been the**
 25 **chance." Some people say, "After the 2001 election,**

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1 **you'd won a big majority, that would have been the**
 2 **chance."**
 3 **The decision I took, rightly or wrongly, as I say,**
 4 **was there was never going to be a moment when this was**
 5 **not going to have to squeeze out the rest of the**
 6 **government agenda, and, you know, however supportive**
 7 **they seemed or however powerful I seemed, this was going**
 8 **to flip like that the moment you put such an issue**
 9 **centre stage. You see the degree of focus on this**
 10 **Inquiry now, so, you know, if you'd been the government**
 11 **of the day and said, "I'm going to legislate on this",**
 12 **and royal commissions and all the rest of it, I think it**
 13 **would have been a -- anyway, that's the decision I took.**
 14 **We were, by then, in my second term, really starting**
 15 **to move forward on reform in public services. Academy**
 16 **schools were being introduced and competition within the**
 17 **health service. We were really getting things --**
 18 **changing major law and order legislation. Later, we had**
 19 **legislation on terror and so on. I never felt that**
 20 **I could risk putting all of that to one side to fight**
 21 **this.**
 22 **Now, that's the political judgment, in a way, that**
 23 **you have to make. So some people would say to me -- and**
 24 **some did say, "Look, you can do this along with**
 25 **everything else", and I used to say to them: "You're**

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1 **being completely unrealistic about this." You take this**
 2 **issue on as Prime Minister -- and you're the Prime**
 3 **Minister. You're the person they think they're holding**
 4 **to account, so in some ways you're the worst person to**
 5 **initiate this debate, because they say, "You're parti**
 6 **pris. You want to control us and put us into**
 7 **a straitjacket."**
 8 **So I never felt that I could take a different**
 9 **strategic decision and I think, as I say, it's only**
 10 **because of this and because of what has happened that**
 11 **you're in a position where a Prime Minister could and**
 12 **indeed should.**
 13 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: But Mr Cameron may say it's rather
 14 easy for you or the other party to say, "Now is the time
 15 for the Prime Minister to grasp the nettle." I've
 16 become rather depressed as I've listened to you. Do you
 17 think it's different now?
 18 **A. Um ... yes. I think it is, actually. I think what has**
 19 **happened -- this is what sometimes happens in life,**
 20 **never mind politics, is that something people have known**
 21 **needs to be sorted out, suddenly the circumstances**
 22 **become such that people say, "Right, it's got to be**
 23 **sorted out."**
 24 **I think what you do about it is very difficult.**
 25 **I don't think it's so difficult in relation to these,**

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<p>1 you know, appalling abuses and so on. I think what's -- 2 the political aspect of this is quite difficult, for 3 reasons we can go into, but I think you can get 4 a political consensus today and keep it, and I think 5 there's a lot of responsibility on the rest of us, by 6 the way. If the Prime Minister is now faced with 7 decisions arising out of your report, it's really 8 important people don't play politics with that, because 9 my anxiety -- there was never anything of this nature 10 that came up in this way. My anxiety, frankly, about 11 the strategic risks of going down this path was I could 12 see a situation where the opposition would immediately 13 be going to the media and saying, "I don't know why he's 14 doing this." Even people within your own party, even 15 within your own Cabinet, would say, "He's gone crazy 16 now. He's trying to take on the ..."</p> <p>17 My actual view was it was not possible. I do think, 18 though, what is very unfair would be to leave this 19 Prime Minister in -- and I'm trying to work out how, if 20 I were him, I would deal with it, and I think if there 21 are reasonable recommendations that come out, and we can 22 come on to some of the things that those might be, 23 I think it's very important that he is not left with 24 a position where he's politically exposed on this, 25 because that is not fair to him, because we should be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 105</p>	<p>1 surprise me that she asked that question.</p> <p>2 Q. In terms of the substance of the matter, though, do you 3 feel that the Communications Act reflected in any way an 4 implied deal with Mr Murdoch or not?</p> <p>5 A. No, absolutely not. For a start, the thing that we did 6 which was boost Ofcom is a thing that he absolutely 7 disliked. And contrary to what's often written about 8 this, Channel 5 was not his -- I mean, I never thought 9 he was (inaudible) Channel 5. Channel 3 would have been 10 a far better fit for him, and that he was unable to do. 11 I mean, my thing within this Communications Act -- 12 because I did talk to the ministers about it several 13 times, my thing was very much to do with trying to open 14 up the media ownership thing.</p> <p>15 I mean, this issue to do with media ownership, 16 I have a view on this that is different from many people 17 who worry about media power, and there are two elements 18 of this. Sometimes people worry about concentration of 19 media ownership, sometimes people worry about foreign 20 owners coming into the British media space.</p> <p>21 I thought the first was always best dealt with as 22 a competition issue, and I thought the second -- I just 23 disagreed with people, that if you said, "Okay", to any 24 foreign owner, you have to now put all the media in 25 British hands, I wasn't ever sure that was going to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 107</p>
<p>1 under no doubt at all that this is going to be extremely 2 difficult, but actually, no, on balance, I think it can 3 be done and it should be done now.</p> <p>4 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Right.</p> <p>5 MR JAY: 2003 now, Mr Blair. The Communications Act.</p> <p>6 A. Mm.</p> <p>7 Q. Took some time to pass through Parliament. It's an act 8 of some complexity and Tessa Jowell told us all about 9 it. She also said in her evidence -- under tab 6 -- 10 within a couple of days of being appointed -- this is 11 one of the pressing issues -- and then she saw you, had 12 a conversation which was, she said, I think necessary, 13 and she asked you directly whether or not any deal had 14 been done with Rupert Murdoch on the reform of the 15 cross-media ownership rules:</p> <p>16 "And he gave me an absolute assurance, which 17 I completely accepted, that there had been no prior 18 agreement."</p> <p>19 First of all, is her evidence accurate on that 20 point?</p> <p>21 A. Yes, that's correct.</p> <p>22 Q. Were you surprised that she asked you that question?</p> <p>23 A. Not particularly. I mean, you know, we're talking 2002, 24 are we, around about? Yeah. By then, this issue to do 25 with me and Rupert Murdoch and so on, so it didn't</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 106</p>	<p>1 produce a different situation.</p> <p>2 And I actually remember during the course of this 3 piece of legislation, I actually wanted to see if there 4 were major media companies, I mean people the Time 5 Warners of this world, Viacom, I think, Axel Springer, 6 other big organisations that if you had a more open 7 media policy would be prepared to come in, because what 8 concerned me always was that you needed -- it wasn't 9 necessary just to have other media ownerships, it was 10 necessary to have other media owners with heft, with the 11 ability to put major investment in, and frankly with the 12 type of global media position that I could see the world 13 moving to.</p> <p>14 Some people took a different view from me. I had no 15 belief that if you turned bits of the media over to 16 British as opposed to foreign owners you were going to 17 necessarily get a fairer crack of the whip.</p> <p>18 Q. Okay. The last point is the 2004 referendum on the 19 European constitution. We've covered, of course, with 20 Mr Straw and with Lord Mandelson, but the position from 21 their evidence is really that had nothing much to do 22 with the position of the Murdoch press. Is that right 23 or not?</p> <p>24 A. Yes. It wasn't, by the way, the Murdoch press's 25 position. I think the majority of the media would have</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 108</p>

27 (Pages 105 to 108)

<p>1 been in favour of a referendum on the constitution.</p> <p>2 I didn't want to do it, by the way, but as I think I say</p> <p>3 in my statement, Jack Straw in the end wrote me a memo</p> <p>4 saying, "It's going to happen, so do you want it to</p> <p>5 happen to you or take the initiative?" and his advice</p> <p>6 very strongly, and I thought rightly in the end, was to</p> <p>7 take the initiative.</p> <p>8 Q. Okay. I'm sure you would want to the draw express</p> <p>9 attention, Mr Blair, to 05575, under the rubric,</p> <p>10 "Particular questions", where you collect together six</p> <p>11 examples that the government turned down the positions,</p> <p>12 as you say, of the Murdoch media. You start off with</p> <p>13 the Man U bid, then BBC, new channels, the increase in</p> <p>14 the licence fee, greater powers to Ofcom, ITV and listed</p> <p>15 events for sport, and you say that's clear evidence of</p> <p>16 the absence of any sort of express deal?</p> <p>17 A. Yes. We were -- I feel on very, very strong ground on</p> <p>18 this. When it came -- as opposed to the more general</p> <p>19 issue to do with the media and regulation and so on,</p> <p>20 when it came to the specifics, yeah, I think it's very,</p> <p>21 very clear and the 2003 Communications Act is an example</p> <p>22 of that. And, you know, the strongest lobbying</p> <p>23 I remember getting from media organisations during my</p> <p>24 time was actually the BBC over the licence fee, and by</p> <p>25 the way we supported and I continue to think that</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 109</p>	<p>1 A. I can't, but I can find out exactly.</p> <p>2 Q. He says in the fourth paragraph, beginning:</p> <p>3 "In my spin doctoring days ..."</p> <p>4 Do you have that one?</p> <p>5 A. Yes.</p> <p>6 Q. The second sentence:</p> <p>7 "It's true that Rupert Murdoch doesn't leave a paper</p> <p>8 trail that could ever prove his influence over but the</p> <p>9 trail of politicians beating their way to him and his</p> <p>10 papers tells a different story."</p> <p>11 I think he's asking one there to draw reasonable and</p> <p>12 sensible inferences from conduct. Would you agree?</p> <p>13 A. Yeah, he is, but I notice that he -- there isn't --</p> <p>14 I don't know that policy that we changed as a result of</p> <p>15 Rupert Murdoch. By that, am I saying he's not</p> <p>16 a powerful figure in the media? Well, no, of course he</p> <p>17 is, and of course you're aware of what his views are,</p> <p>18 and that's why I say part of my job was to manage this</p> <p>19 situation so that you didn't get into a situation where</p> <p>20 you were shifting policy. And on Europe, which is the</p> <p>21 only example he gives, I would say very strongly we</p> <p>22 maintained the position that I believed in in Europe,</p> <p>23 and that was a position the Sun and the News of the</p> <p>24 World frequently disagreed with me on. I remember that</p> <p>25 headline they did once, I think, was I the "most</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 111</p>
<p>1 a strong BBC is a very important part of our democracy,</p> <p>2 even though obviously, particularly over Iraq, we had</p> <p>3 a severe falling out with them. But none of these</p> <p>4 things were things they liked or wanted.</p> <p>5 That's why I don't -- you know, I think although the</p> <p>6 commercial interests of these organisations are</p> <p>7 obviously always important, I do say in my statement</p> <p>8 I think looking at their influence solely through that</p> <p>9 paradigm, I think, is a mistake.</p> <p>10 Q. Can I put to you a contrary view from Mr Price, which is</p> <p>11 under tab 42.</p> <p>12 A. Mm.</p> <p>13 Q. I don't think this is in the context of an express deal,</p> <p>14 but it might be of implied deal. This is in the second</p> <p>15 file we've prepared for you, a piece he wrote in the</p> <p>16 Guardian on 1 July 2006, headed:</p> <p>17 "Rupert Murdoch is effectively a member of Blair's</p> <p>18 Cabinet."</p> <p>19 First of all, can we be clear, Mr Price worked for</p> <p>20 you from 1998 to 2000 and -- not sure exactly when, but</p> <p>21 can you help us?</p> <p>22 A. I think Lance Price was, first of all, a Labour Party</p> <p>23 press officer and he came into Downing Street for</p> <p>24 a time, at least.</p> <p>25 Q. For about how many years was he there, can you help?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 110</p>	<p>1 dangerous man in the world" or something, so this is --</p> <p>2 this is not -- it's to misdescribe the issue, actually.</p> <p>3 Q. Then he says a bit later down:</p> <p>4 "I've never met Mr Murdoch, but at times when</p> <p>5 I worked at Downing Street, he seemed like the 24th</p> <p>6 member of the Cabinet. His voice was rarely heard, but</p> <p>7 then the same could have been said of many of the other</p> <p>8 23, but his presence was always felt."</p> <p>9 Well, what do you make of that?</p> <p>10 A. Look, also in respect of policy, by the way, I should</p> <p>11 say the whole -- if you look at the policies that</p> <p>12 Rupert Murdoch or indeed anybody else was concerned</p> <p>13 about, they fitted into certain categories. Europe was</p> <p>14 obviously -- that was probably the major thing he and</p> <p>15 I used to row about, actually, and debate, but sometimes</p> <p>16 what people wouldn't accept from the Labour Party</p> <p>17 perspective was things like public service reform or</p> <p>18 trade union reform, for example, I didn't -- our views</p> <p>19 may have coincided, but I believed in what I was doing.</p> <p>20 I didn't need him or anyone else to tell me what to do.</p> <p>21 So I think this is -- you know, it's ...</p> <p>22 Q. He says when he submitted his book, "The Spin Doctor's</p> <p>23 Diary" to the Cabinet Office, your staff were deeply</p> <p>24 unhappy:</p> <p>25 "No fewer than a third of their reactions related to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 112</p>

1 one man; not Tony Blair or even Gordon Brown, as might
 2 have been expected, but Rupert Murdoch."
 3 Do you remember that?
 4 **A. I don't, frankly. Actually, by the way, it says**
 5 **apparently he was here from 1998 to 2001, I see down at**
 6 **the bottom.**
 7 Q. Thank you. The final point:
 8 "In my first few weeks as Alastair Campbell's deputy
 9 [so that's in 1998] I was told by somebody who would
 10 know that we'd assured Mr Murdoch we wouldn't change
 11 policy on Europe without talking to him first."
 12 Was that assurance given?
 13 **A. No. We would never have given an assurance to Murdoch**
 14 **or anybody else that we were not going to change policy**
 15 **without seeking some sort of permission. That's absurd.**
 16 **However, having said that, I mean, if we were about**
 17 **to engage in a major change of policy on an issue that**
 18 **mattered to any particular media group, we would**
 19 **probably have tried to prepare the way for it, but**
 20 **I mean that, again, I think, is perfectly sensible and**
 21 **there's nothing wrong with that.**
 22 **You see, the thing that's important to realise about**
 23 **this is, of course, you were aware that he, and indeed**
 24 **other papers, had very strong stances on issues, and**
 25 **again I think it's important that this is not simply**

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1 located with the Murdoch media and nobody else. So we
 2 realised the Guardian would have very strong issues on
 3 certain things, and the Mirror, for example, and
 4 obviously the Mail group and so on, the Telegraph. But
 5 would we interact with them in order to try and, if we
 6 thought they might be opposed, soften that opposition,
 7 say, "Look, I think you should be aware of X, Y and Z,
 8 so when you're writing about it, you should realise this
 9 is our argument"? Of course we would. I don't think
 10 you're going to stop that, and even if you don't do it
 11 from the official organs of government, if you're
 12 a Cabinet member about to take through a difficult piece
 13 of legislation, you're going to speak to many, many
 14 different media outlets to try and get your point of
 15 view across. That won't just be by formal interviews,
 16 you'll briefing them, you'll have in the main political
 17 correspondents and say, "Look, this is what I'm trying
 18 to do, this is why I'm trying to do it."
 19 I don't think there's anything wrong with that.
 20 I think that's a perfectly healthy interaction with the
 21 media, and (b), I think it's absolutely inevitable.
 22 That is a completely different thing from saying, you
 23 know, "You have a veto over policy", and by the way, if
 24 we -- I mean, the most obvious case I gave you earlier
 25 is the EU rebate, when there were vitriolic editorials

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1 **written about my position on a whole series of things to**
 2 **do with that, and we did the budget deal with literally**
 3 **not -- I doubt we got any part of the media on board for**
 4 **that, and that was a big deal. We did it and we did it**
 5 **irrespective of what the Murdoch media or anybody else**
 6 **said because I thought it was the right thing to do for**
 7 **the country.**
 8 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: All right. That's probably
 9 a convenient moment. We'll resume at 2 o'clock, if
 10 that's all right, Mr Blair. Thank you very much indeed.
 11 **A. Thank you.**
 12 **(1.00 pm)**
 13 **(The luncheon adjournment)**
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 15
 16 I N D E X
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 18 MR ANTHONY CHARLES LYNTON BLAIR1
 19 (sworn)
 20 Questions by MR JAY1
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