

Sirs

In the 2012 Leveson report, Leveson anticipated the possibility that the press industry would refuse to establish a system of independent self-regulation that met his criteria. And that is exactly what is happening. What is worse is that the Government, acting as the press industry puppet, is now blocking the coming into effect of the main incentive - a law passed by Parliament in 2013 that would guarantee access to justice for victims of libel and press intrusion. It was designed by Leveson to encourage the big newspapers to join a recognised self-regulator.

This Autumn, you, the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) – set up to assess whether self-regulators meet Leveson’s criteria – will report to Parliament. Your report seems to have one of two options:

1. A recognised regulator exists (if IMPRESS is recognised) but that most significant publishers remain outside the recognised system
2. No recognised regulator exists (if IMPRESS is not recognised), and that all significant publishers remain outside it.

Whichever option is in your report, the conclusion must be that the big newspapers have rejected this system.

I ask you, the PRP, should forcefully remind Parliament of what the Leveson Report said should happen if the industry tried to veto his recommendations and refused to comply. The Leveson Report says: 'if some or all of the industry are not willing to participate in effective independent regulation, my own concluded view is to reject the notion that they should escape regulation altogether. I cannot, and will not, recommend another last chance saloon for the press. With some measure of regret, therefore, I am driven to conclude that the Government should be ready to consider the need for a statutory backstop regulator being established, to ensure, at the least, that the press are subject to regulation that would require the fullest compliance with the criminal and civil law, if not also to ensure consequences equivalent to those that would flow from an independent self-regulatory system.'

In the meantime, regardless of whether you recognise IMPRESS, you (the PRP) should strongly recommend to Parliament that the key 'guaranteed access to justice incentive' (section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act) should be brought into effect as Parliament had intended.

Regards

Geoff Leggott