

1. In your opinion, has the new system for overseeing press regulation in the UK been a success or failure so far? Please explain your reasons.

So far, it has not worked. Whether or not IMPRESS is recognised, many relevant publishers have decided to stay outside the recognised system in order to try to continue the old failed system. Leveson – while offering one last voluntary chance to get their house in order - anticipated that this may happen and said that if it did, Parliament needed to act. The PRP should take the opportunity of its report to remind Parliament of Leveson's words on this matter.

He said: "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."

2. For publishers, joining an approved regulator is voluntary. For regulators, applying for Charter recognition is voluntary. In your opinion, what factors or issues will affect regulators' and publishers' decisions when they consider these choices?

Leveson considered this question and concluded that the voluntary version of the system would only have a chance to work if publishers were offered incentives for joining it. As such, he proposed a system of "cost-shifting" and it is this measure which is the main incentive for a publisher to join a recognised regulator - and for a regulator to seek recognition.

By attaining recognition and agreeing to offer low-cost arbitration, publishers are protected in two ways. First, it reduces the effect of 'chilling' so it can publish stories without the subject of the story threatening to bankrupt the journalist/publisher. Secondly, if a claimant rejects the arbitration and chooses to go to court, the publisher is protected from paying courts costs.

It would be a win-win situation: ordinary people would be guaranteed access to justice through low-cost arbitration and the publishers would be freed from chilling and potential court costs if a rich individual or company chooses to reject the route of arbitration, instead insisting on going to court. This measure should have been achieved by section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013: a critical part of the Royal Charter system which Leveson recommended in outline terms. Parliament endorsed this measure too and intended it to apply. It is a part of the "recognition system".

But the Government is blocking it.

I urge the PRP to recommend to Parliament and the Government that section 40

is "commenced" as soon as possible, as it is integral to the system of recognition & incentives system.

I - And many, many others - especially the victims of tabloid 'Journalism' - and the same tabloids (and broadsheets) that still see themselves fit to impinge upon People's lives without redress - URGE you to commence section 40 A.S.A.P.

To finish, may i also say that it is a disgrace, the level of Newspaper ownership in England, - held mainly in part by one certain individual - and 2 Brothers (who base their ownership etc in The Channel Islands - thereby avoiding taxes). Basically offering the Public a 'choice' of Newspapers that are 75% foreign owned, their Editorial stance guided by the Owners' whims - and right-wing agendas. It is barely impossible in fact, to buy a Newspaper that doesn't have a right-wing 'Send all the Immigrants back' etc etc - and therefore 'form the agenda' of the Public - Elections being a case in point, and a very, very important one to come shortly. 'Great Britain' has sadly become 'Little Britain' because of this, i fully believe - having studied the Media since i was barely a teenager (delivering thousands and thousands of 'papers during that time - 5 'rounds' a day partly instilled that), and now just into my 50's. (And to revert back to the former - re: Ownership... easy access to 'No.10/11' - ie: Rupert Murdoch's two meetings with George Osborne in the week leading up to the latter's Report that the B.B.C. was "Not fit for purpose...and swingeing changes and cuts needed to be made".

A number of which 'titles' also now peddle their scurrilous 'tat' in The Republic of Ireland - including 'The Daily Mail' (or 'The Irish Mail' as it is known - which for over a hundred years has printed highly derogatory headlines about the Irish people - ie: 'Savages' (in the days before The Mail itself was an active supporter of Hitler - and Oswald Mosley, and fomented race-hate against minorities and immigrants in the East-End of London. - Some things never change, it just does it on a wider scale). As regards its 'Irish Edition' - It is of course, very careful to print separate Editions each day.

(As could be seen when 'The Wind That Shakes The Barley' won a prestigious Award some years ago, - and a number of 'alternative' Headlines since).

Once again, I urge you to take action - and prevent any more Victims of Press Intrusion - of which there have been an untold number as you know, from ever happening again.

Otherwise - there will most certainly be many more.

Yours Most Sincerely,

John Aston