

Question 1. The new system for overseeing press self-regulation in the UK has so far been a complete failure, since IPSO is not only very far from being Leveson-compliant, but is in many ways even more a creature of the press than was the PCC, which was excoriated by Leveson. Consequently, press standards are as debased as ever, IPSO has done nothing whatsoever to ameliorate the situation, and is made to look ridiculous by papers whose owners finance this sham system of 'self-regulation' - witness, for example, the *Sun*'s thumbing its nose to IPSO when forced to publish a correction (of sorts) to its 'Queen Backs Brexit' story. Not only have newspapers consistently misrepresented what Leveson actually proposed, but they have refused point blank to have anything to do with the system of self-regulation agreed by then Coalition partners and Labour and underpinned by the Royal Charter. No content with putting up two fingers to Parliament, the public and the monarch they are now attempting to undermine the authority of the courts in the PJS case, leading Desmond Browne QC to conclude that 'the court needs to consider whether we are living in a country under the rule of the law or under the rule of the press'. You also will not need me to point out that certain papers have done their utmost to ridicule and undermine the PRP itself. This is an exceptionally serious situation, and it simply cannot be allowed to continue any longer. Lord Justice Leveson argued that 'if some or all of the industry are not willing to participate in effective independent regulation ... 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'. Even though the present government has shown itself to be remarkably unwilling to do anything that Leveson recommended, and indeed has bent over backwards to appease those papers which have flagrantly and repeatedly traduced his inquiry and report, the PRP should remind Parliament what Leveson stated that it should do if publishers refused to comply with his recommendations.

Question 2. Leveson sensibly concluded that the voluntary system of press self-regulation which he proposed would work only if publishers were offered incentives to join it. As you explain very clearly in the consultation document, the incentives for joining, and the penalties for refusing to join, were enshrined in section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. Again, the press has waged a quite hysterical campaign against this measure, as well as against IMPRESS, the PRP and indeed anyone remotely involved with either body. The NMA has also been lobbying strenuously behind the scenes, including bombarding the PRP with highly tendentious anti-IMPRESS propaganda. Again, those who own and run the press have shown themselves utterly determined to brook absolutely no limits to their power to do exactly as they please (which is their definition of press freedom, albeit a highly contestable one). In these circumstances, the PRP should recommend to Parliament that section 40 is 'commenced' at the earliest possible opportunity.