

From: Tony Elger, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Warwick

8th June 2016

I understand that you are currently considering what is to happen regarding existing and potential future legislation on the regulation of the press in Britain. I write as someone who followed the deliberations of the Levinson Inquiry with great interest and with the hope that, as a result, a meaningful form of accountability and redress would be developed in relation to press reporting. It seems to be clear that earlier forms of self-regulation were weak or ineffective and that Levinson very carefully, and in some respects cautiously, laid the basis for a more effective framework.

As you will aware, the Leveson Report directly addressed the issue of what should happen if the industry tried to veto his recommendations and refused to comply with those recommendations. Leveson wrote that **"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."** I believe that the Press Recognition Panel should endorse this argument and draw it once again to the attention of parliament, politicians and the press themselves.

Meanwhile, whether or not IMPRESS is recognised by the Press Recognition Panel, I believe that they 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. Without this I see no reason why the public should have any faith either in the recognition and regulatory system or in in the capacity of politicians and parliament to address the public disquiet about the British press. Otherwise the Levinson investigation and report will have become a wasted opportunity and a waste of time.