

NI Group Limited
D. J. Mohan
Fourth Statement
"DJM4"
16 July 2012

IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS

**FOURTH WITNESS
STATEMENT OF
DOMINIC JAMES MOHAN**

I, Dominic James Mohan c/o The Sun, News Group Newspapers Limited, of 3 Thomas More Square, London E98 1XY, will say as follows:

1. I am Editor of The Sun and have been since August 2009. This is my fourth statement to the Inquiry.
2. This statement is provided pursuant to a section 21 notice addressed to me dated 5 July 2012. The notice stated as follows:

"Your publication has contained the articles listed below, under the headlines given. Please provide your comments on the articles particularly, but not limited to, explaining why the story was chosen for publication; why the contents of the article were considered appropriate; and how you consider the article complies with the Editors' Code of Practice."

3. I have set out my responses to these questions in respect of each article listed by the Inquiry below.

Man becomes first in UK to give birth to a baby (13 February 2012)

4. The Inquiry asks why this *"story was chosen for publication and why the content was considered appropriate"*. A story about a man giving birth to a baby is in my view plainly in the public interest and a subject for serious public debate. Lord Alfred Harmsworth, the first publisher of the Daily Mail, once said: *"When a dog bites a man, that is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, that is news."* To paraphrase Lord Harmsworth: *"When a woman has a baby, that is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man has a baby, that is news."*
5. This story about an unnamed man giving birth to a baby first appeared in The Sunday Times on 12 February 2012. The reporter, Lois Rogers, I understand, was given some

details of the case, but not the identity of the individual, by a representative of the Beaumont Society, the UK's longest established transgender support group, who was quoted in the published story (pages 1 to 2 of **Exhibit DJM4**).

6. The Sun followed up the Sunday Times story the next day with a story headlined "*Brit man has baby*" (pages 3 to 4 of **Exhibit DJM4**), which also included a request for information: "*Do you know the dad? Call the Sun newsdesk on 020 7782 4104*".
7. During research for the story, The Sun contacted the Beaumont Society for further information and for help in passing a message to the man who had given birth. In response the group issued a letter (page 5 of **Exhibit DJM4**), which said: "*...what we do sometimes offer, in consultation with our information officer Janett Scott is offer to publish your details on the website news section if the person wishes to get in touch. Clearly this wouldn't be a guarantee they would however.*"
8. The Sun staff tried to contact the charity Mermaids, with whom the newspaper has enjoyed a good working relationship in matters of gender dysmorphia, and the Gender Identity Research and Education Society. Neither charity managed to return the calls, possibly because it was a Sunday.
9. The Sun was still very keen to contact the man who had given birth to ask whether, in exchange for a payment, he would agree to be interviewed for a feature. I consider it entirely reasonable and legitimate to make a public attempt to contact someone to whom we wished to make a commercial proposal. As it turned out, nobody supplied any information which might have enabled our journalists to make contact. At no point was the individual or their family harassed in any way. Nor would they have been even if we had managed to talk to them. Giving any individual an opportunity to accept or reject a chance to be interviewed by a newspaper does not amount to harassment or an invasion of privacy.
10. The day after publication of The Sun story the Press Complaints Commission circulated a general advisory note to all media (pages 6 to 7 of **Exhibit DJM4**) following a complaint by Ms Helen Belcher of Trans Media Watch. This PCC note said:

"Ms Belcher says that Trans Media Watch has received contacts from several individuals who are concerned about contacts from The Sun, which apparently relate to efforts to identify the individual at the centre of claims that a British man who has undergone gender transition has given birth. Ms Belcher considers that these contacts – and the coverage generally – raise potential issues under Clause 3 (Privacy), Clause 4 (Harassment), Clause 6 (Children) and Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Editors' Code of Practice. ...As you will recognise, this is not a particularised complaint: Ms Belcher is not formally acting as a representative of any individual. In particular, she is not representing the individual at the centre of the story. However, this is clearly a sensitive issue, and it is not clear to me whether

the individual at the centre of the story has consented to the release of the information. For that reason, I am drawing these concerns to your attention so that you will be aware of them in considering The Sun's reporting on this issue. I have also advised Ms Belcher that should any individuals wish to register formal complaints in this regard, we will handle them in the normal way."

11. The Sun also received a letter from Ms Belcher in which she accused The Sun of failing to comply with the PCC Code, in particular section 3, 4, 6 and 12 (pages 8 to 9 of **Exhibit DJM4**). Ms Belcher's complaint was unfounded. In my opinion there was no breach of the PCC Code. As I said earlier, giving any individual an opportunity to accept or reject a chance to be interviewed by a newspaper does not amount to harassment or an invasion of privacy. Who knows, they might even accept the offer and be happy to tell their story to millions of readers in a national newspaper. And, in fact, so it proved in this case.
12. The Mail on Sunday scooped The Sun and managed to make contact with the man who had given birth. He agreed to give an interview, in which he was not named in exchange, I am led to believe, for a considerable sum of money. This interview was published as a splash and double-page feature on 19 February 2012, "*My mum told me I'd be a good mummy. I said 'No, I'll be a good dad'. In his own emotional words, the first British man to give birth to a baby tells his own extraordinary story*" (pages 10 - 14 of **Exhibit DJM4**).

Zac is a boy aged 5 but lives as a girl (20 February 2012)

13. The origin of this story is as follows. Theresa Avery posted details on a public Facebook group discussion forum about her son Zach, who suffers from Gender Identity Disorder ("**GID**"). The postings were spotted by a reporter from Caters news agency in Birmingham who then contacted Ms Avery to ask if she wished to be interviewed about her son and his experience of GID for a news story which would be distributed to other news outlets. Ms Avery consented because she wished to raise awareness of her son's condition and also to thank her son's school for all their efforts in helping Zach integrate.
14. Ms Avery was happy for the publicity for both her and her son, and in fact she encouraged it. The reason why the mother and child are clearly identifiable in The Sun's article is because parental consent had been given to the agency. Ms Avery also posed for photographs with her son, which were taken by a Caters agency photographer.
15. The story and pictures were distributed to the media and were published in The Sun and several other national newspapers – such as the Metro, the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Mail and the Daily Mirror (see pages 15 to 27 of **Exhibit DJM4**).
16. The Sun published the story about the Averys in print and online on 21 February 2012 (see pages 28 to 31 of **Exhibit DJM4**). The tenor of the article, accompanied by happy photographs, was entirely positive. Ms Avery was quoted as saying: "*People need to be aware of this condition because it's very common but even many family support workers*

have never heard of cases in children. There are people out there but they don't want to talk about it."

17. The article also contained a quote from the Tavistock and Patman Foundation Trust, a national body which helps people suffering from gender identity disorder, and the final paragraph in the article promoted the work of the Beaumont Trust, a charity offering advice to those with gender identity problems: *"For help and advice on gender identity call the Beaumont Trust on 07000 287 878 or visit www.beaumont-trust.org.uk".*
18. I regard The Sun's handling of this highly personal and sensitive family story as impeccable. It is a good example of how the title has worked hard to improve its coverage of gender issues.
19. I expect that all the other titles who published similar stories on the Avery family will justify their own coverage to the Inquiry similarly.

Bwing on the Euros (3 May 2012)

20. This story was a cheeky and affectionate celebration of news that Roy Hodgson had been confirmed as the manager of the England football team and that he was now urging the nation to unite behind the team and offer heartfelt support. There was nothing cynical, bullying or negative about The Sun's coverage of Mr Hodgson's ascent to the top job in English football.
21. Mr Hodgson cannot roll his "rs" in speech and as a result he has been known affectionately for years by his nickname "Woy" to football fans and readers of the sports pages of most popular national newspapers, and indeed the Guardian. For example, at the Europa League final in Basle, Switzerland, in 2010, when Mr Hodgson was managing Fulham Football Club, fans of his own club made their support of him and his team well known by holding up a ten-foot banner which read : "In Woy We Twust" (see below).



(image taken from <http://co.fulhamfc.com/forum/topics/liverpool-away-38?id=3232738%3ATopic%3A626679&page=3>)

22. It is entirely right that The Sun, the country's most popular tabloid newspaper, should be able to converse with its readers in the colloquial language they adopt themselves and use wordplay around the nicknames they have themselves invented. This is one of the important ways in which a tabloid newspaper builds a rapport with its readers.
23. In my opinion it was perverse that the Football Association should describe The Sun headline on 3 May 2012, as "*unacceptable*" when, to the best of my knowledge, it has never once in the past five years raised any criticism of the use of Mr Hodgson's nickname in the scores of times it has been published in the sports pages of national newspapers. The FA may wish to apply a different set of standards to descriptions of Premier League managers and England managers, or to what appears on the news versus the sports pages. The Sun doesn't, and won't. The FA is entitled to its opinion, but I regard their criticism that the headline was "*in poor taste and disrespectful*" as an ill-considered response, something I told the FA myself at the time of their complaint.
24. The newspapers that were among the first to criticise The Sun for "insensitivity" for its splash headline - the Guardian and the Mirror - have themselves regularly referred to Mr Hodgson as "Woy" over the years. Why did they commit the same alleged sin as The Sun? Simple. Because "Woy" has become Mr Hodgson's affectionate nickname, known to

millions of football fans - but perhaps not to members of the public who don't share the same love of the game or appreciation of its tribal language.

The Daily Mirror

- (i) The Daily Mirror sports pages, back page on 26 August 2010: "*Woy's war with WAFAs*" (pages 32 to 33 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
- (ii) The Daily Mirror sports pages, page 68 on 5 October 2010: "*Woy needs to find winning language*" (page 34 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
- (iii) The Daily Mirror sports pages, page 66 on 7 April 2012: "*Woy wonder at staying up*" (page 35 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
- (iv) The Daily Mirror sports spread, pages 48 - 49 on 30 April 2012: "*Oh Why, oh why, oh Woy*" (pages 36 to 38 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
- (v) The Daily Mirror sports spread pages 4 - 5 on 2 May 2012 which had a graphic cross-sectioned "*Woy's brain*" (pages 39 to 42 of **Exhibit DJM4**)

The Guardian

- (vi) The Guardian online, 27 February 2009 "*Tevez to Real Madrid (part 74)*" (pages 43 to 44 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
 - (vii) The Guardian online, 9 February 2011, Denmark v England: "*21mins Neale Redington has a word of praise for Uncle Woy: 'For all Woy's shortcomings a least he called out Johnson as rubbish...'*" (pages 45 to 51 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
 - (viii) The Guardian online, 5 March 2011, Saturday clockwatch: "*1:47pm: Substitute Peter Odemwingie was given a stiff talking to by Woy Hodgson on the touchline....'*" (pages 52 to 63 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
 - (ix) The Guardian online, 8 August 2011, "*West Bromwich Albion Premier League 2011-12 team guide*" (pages 64 to 66 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
25. Indeed, as recently as last Friday (13 July 2012), the Evening Standard ran an article entitled "*Come on, Woy, help Zweig score a plaque*" (page 67 of **Exhibit DJM4**).
26. Mr Hodgson is not the first Roy to be nicknamed "Woy". The late Lord Jenkins of Hillhead was famously known as "Woy" Jenkins to friends and enemies alike. I do not recollect any such hullabaloo over his nickname - which was used throughout much of his political career which spanned the best part of half a century. But perhaps in his day people were less inclined to pick up cudgels on behalf of others for imagined slights.
27. I refer to just three examples:
- (i) The Daily Telegraph, 26 January 2001, "*It's not Mandy, it's not even Tony - it's Woy wot won it*" (pages 68 to 70 of **Exhibit DJM4**)

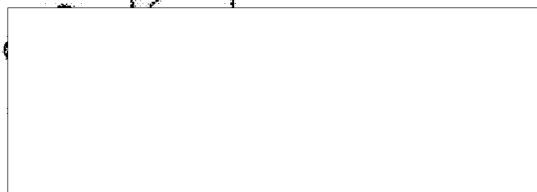
- (ii) Guardian online, 12 May 2010, "My Fantasy Coalition Cabinet" – quote from the article: "For the Home Office there could be only one: the great pioneer of the permissive society as Labour home secretary in the 60s, Roy Jenkins (although Woy would, over an "agweeable lunch" and a decent claret, insist the term "civilised society" was pweferable)" (pages 71 to 72 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
- (iii) The Observer, 25 June 2000, "Why Woy feels let down by his boy" (pages 73 to 75 of **Exhibit DJM4**)
- 28. My only regret with regard to the Roy Hodgson story is that The Sun described him as having a "speech impediment". On reflection, I do not regard someone's inability to roll their "rs" as a speech impediment. Rather it is simply a distinguishing feature of their speech.
- 29. The day after the Roy Hodgson story was published, The Sun splashed with the headline "Wossy: Roy Row is Ruddy Ridiculous" on 3 May 2012, with a follow-up interview with Jonathan Ross, the TV personality who shares the same distinguishing manner of speech and who for years has been known affectionately to Sun readers and fans of his TV programmes as "Wossy" (pages 76 to 78 of **Exhibit DJM4**). In fact, the name "Wossy" has become such an integral part of Mr Ross's celebrity persona that he uses it as his own Twitter handle (page 79 of **Exhibit DJM4**).
- 30. In The Sun interview Mr Ross said:

"I don't think there's anything wrong with it and I'm sure Roy is big enough to take care of himself.

"It hasn't ever bothered me. I'm used to it. And I'm sure it doesn't bother Roy. Also, he is an incredibly well read, intelligent man. He will take it as a joke. I can see it's a joke. Everyone knows The Sun has a cheeky sense of humour.....really not a big deal. I wish we weren't part of such a judgemental culture."
- 31. He also said: "The world is bankrupt and we're worrying about The Sun doing what they do....who really cares? Is anyone really upset? No."
- 32. I agree wholeheartedly with Mr Ross.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed



Dated

July 16th 2012