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From the Group Legal Department
2 Derry Street
London W8 5HF
Phone: 020 361 52603

Mr Khaleel Desai The
Leveson Inquiry Royal
Courts of Justice
Strand
London
WC2A 2LL

18 July 2012

Dear Mr Desai,

Thank you for your letter of June 20.

I was pleased to give evidence to the Inquiry and am sure Lord Justice Leveson knows the importance I attach to protecting free speech.

The tweet to which you refer was indeed an accurate reflection of my views; *"Forgot to tell #Leveson that it's unreasonable to expect individuals to spend £millions on newspapers and not have access to politicians."*

By "access to politicians", I absolutely do not imply the opportunity to influence policy or make commercial gain.

I have never sought to influence government policy or seek commercial favour in a meeting with a politician; nor have I had any conversations that I would describe as inappropriate.

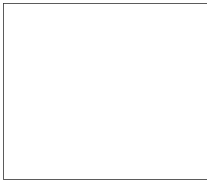
I do, however, think it reasonable that those who invest millions of pounds in publishing enjoy one potential benefit of that investment, which is the chance to meet politicians.

I outlined the purpose of those meetings in my Witness Statement, and believe that what matters most about them is not their frequency but the content of the discussions.

Further, I believe erecting a Chinese Wall between proprietors and politicians would be hugely damaging to the fabric of British society.

In my view it is an unnecessary and disproportionate response to the abuses the Inquiry is looking into and would block the perfectly proper interaction between some of the key stakeholders in this country. The proposal would be a major disincentive to those who might fund newspapers, as would the recording of those conversations. Given the commercial pressures on the industry at the moment, I think such measures undesirable.

Yours sincerely,



Evgeny Lebedev