

The Leveson Inquiry

Witness Statement for Part 1, Module 1

Witness statement of Hugh Grant

I, Hugh Grant, c/o Collyer Bristow LLP, 4 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4DF will say as follows:

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1. I make this statement in connection with my role as a Core Participant in the Leveson Inquiry.
2. Save where the contrary appears, I make this witness statement from facts within my own knowledge and belief and which I believe to be true. There is now produced and shown to me marked "HG1" a small paginated bundle of documents. Where I refer to page numbers in this statement, I am referring to pages in "HG1".

Introduction

3. I'd like, if I may, to make this statement wearing four hats. First as a normal person who used occasionally to buy and read popular newspapers. Then as someone who became a subject of interest to those papers. Then as someone who became a student of those papers - of their methods and of their influence over the police and government. And finally as someone who takes an interest in how our laws might protect public interest journalism while dealing with the abuses of some non public interest journalism.

First Hat – Normal Punter

4. Growing up, if my brother or I happened to have bought a copy of the News of the World my mother would say, "How can you bring that filth into this house? Then, after a pause: "After you with it." And I suppose that was my attitude to papers like the

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News of the World for the first 33 years of my life. It's probably the attitude of most people. (Or was, until July.) That they were a bit of largely harmless fun.

Second Hat – Subject of Interest

5. Then, after ten years as a working, but not particularly successful actor I was very lucky with one film and found myself suddenly an object of interest and potential sales to British newspapers, particularly the more popular ones. I could say that my relationship with those papers over the ensuing years had had its ups and downs, but that would be perjury. There was a brief up at the very beginning and then 16 years of down. I'm not going to moan about that. And I'm not going to list all of my run-ins with the press. There have been too many and it would be too boring. I'll just mention some of the highlights.

Divine Brown

6. The most remembered was the press attention that followed my arrest in Los Angeles in July 1995 for having an encounter with a prostitute in a car. The ensuing press storm was intense, but I have no real complaint about it, and it is emphatically not the reason why I campaign about abuses of the press. I did the crime, was caught, and the thing was a matter of public record. Of course it was going to be reported. Some, like the French, were amazed at the sheer scale of the hullabaloo about a man having sex, but on the whole it was to be expected.
7. There is only one thing that still bothers me about that episode - the break-in at my London flat. It came at the height of the press storm, and was the only time that that flat (which I still own) has been broken into in 25 years. It's a fourth floor walk up and not, I imagine, ideal for burglars. On this occasion my girlfriend and I were out, and the front door was forced off its hinges. Nothing was stolen. The next day the police came to take a statement. The day after that one of the red top papers, I forget which, had a story that detailed the interior of the flat, including the signs of a domestic row. (Yes, there had been one). I have wondered ever since whether this story might perhaps have come from the burglars. Or from the police. When I told this story recently to

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the MP, Tom Watson he smiled knowingly and told me that a number of people he'd spoken to for his forthcoming book had had similar experiences. Even down to the forced front door method of entry.

Libels

8. I've had a great many occasions to complain to the papers for libel. All my complaints, to my recollection, have been successful. But I'll just mention a few.
9. My first experience came shortly after I suddenly became successful, but before my LA arrest. I had been making a film in Wales. The Daily Mirror and the now defunct Today newspaper reported that I'd been verbally cruel to a young local boy who was being an extra. It was entirely untrue. I sued and won damages and there was a statement in open court admitting the falsity of the article. But what the episode taught me was that these victories are invariably Pyrrhic. The paper will always take savage editorial revenge. Sometimes this comes instantly, sometimes they prefer to take their vengeance cold. Sometimes it will come in the form of a personal attack from a columnist. Sometimes as a new story that paints you in a very unflattering light but expertly stops one pip short of libel. Typically this is done with wilful misreporting. It is amazing what damage can be done by a reporter with, for example, a cunning use of selective memory or a deliberately deaf ear to tone.
10. Whatever the case, the system is that if a popular paper libels you and you successfully sue, you lose. This deterrent of course is an essential part of their business model. It is their main line of defence against lawsuits of any form, in the same way as it has been their main line of defence against any form of attack, including attempts to outlaw or reform their worst practices. People might wonder how much a damaging piece in a paper really matters. There's the old adage about yesterday's fish and chip paper. But nowadays not only does mud stick, but it splatters -- massively and everywhere -- all over the walls of the World Wide Web. Untrue stories will be quoted back to you as fact by credulous journalists in far flung corners of the globe for

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years to come. (And of course a large part of the reason why they believed them in the first place comes from the fact they found them on "Newspaper" websites, and newspapers of course don't lie). But that's if you are lucky enough to be there and to have a chance to even try and rebut them. Generally, of course, they will just dutifully copy them into their piece. And so the splatter re-splatters. This is the main reason why up till now so few people have dared to criticise the excesses of sections of the press. The revenge is terrible. And the battle is uneven. They have the powerful microphone of their paper and a million speakers in the internet. You have the tiny party trumpet of your lawyer. (And of course the broken whistle of the PCC).

11. My second example: In February 2007 the Mail on Sunday ran an article saying that my relationship with my long term girlfriend was falling apart because of my secret relationship with another woman. This was entirely untrue. Again, damages were awarded and a statement was made in open court by the paper admitting the accusation had been false. What was interesting was that the "other woman" I was supposed to be close to was reported to be a "plummy voiced" executive at Warner Brothers in America, with whom I was supposed to have late night phone chats. There was no such executive. What there was, was an assistant to an executive at a film company associated with Warner Brothers. She was English, a middle aged, happily married woman and in no way a girlfriend. But because the executive was a friend, she had also become a friend. Hollywood people get their assistants to do the dialling. They also get them to leave voice messages. Hers were entirely innocent ("Could you call XX back") but they were plummy – voiced and sometimes jokey. And they often came late at night because LA is 8 hours behind. We know from Paul Dacre's assertions that the Mail papers have never based stories on intercepted phone messages, so the source of this story remains a great mystery.

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12. In 1997, under a large picture of myself, I published an article in the Sunday Express. The problem was that I hadn't written it. Nor had I even been consulted on it. In the article "I" expressed

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a number of opinions unrecognisable to me. Many of them were a source of mockery and contempt in other papers in subsequent days. I sued and won damages and a statement admitting fault was read in open court by the paper's lawyers.

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Privacy

13. Again - just a few random examples.

In June 1996 the Daily Mirror ran a story about a recent visit of mine to see a specialist at the Charing Cross hospital. The article included details of my condition and the treatment. After consulting a lawyer, both the doctor and I separately complained to the PCC. The PCC dragged their feet for many months and finally, after much expensive lobbying from our lawyers, the Mirror published a small paragraph, deep in the paper, regarding a complaint from me to the PCC. Its conclusion was that the "The complaint was upheld". That was all. There were no specifics, and no mention of publishing medical records.

14. Subsequently I sued the Mirror for breach of confidence and the Mirror tried to defend my claim. I applied for judgment. I was awarded an injunction and damages. I understand that the judge made severe criticisms of the newspapers conduct.
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So much for an effective PCC.

15. More recently, in March of this year (2011) I had to take myself to the Chelsea and Westminster hospital in the middle of the night. Details of the visit and the treatment appeared a couple of days later in the Sun and the Daily Express. I was by this time of my life weary and wary of long drawn out legal battles with the papers. To cut things short, and in an attempt to be elegant, I asked the papers (via my lawyer) to each make a £5000 contribution to a charity I support. The charity is called Healthtalkonline, and I thought it was neat in that they had talked about my health online. (As well as in newsprint). The Express refused to pay a penny. The Sun fought hard but eventually gave £1500.
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16. In 1996 my girlfriend's father suddenly died. I helped to organise

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the funeral. It was a small family occasion in a tiny village church. Just as the service was about to start we realised two of the congregation were unknown to any of the family. They turned out to be reporters from popular papers. They had come, they said, "to pay their respects". They had never met my girlfriend's father.

17. In 2006, while filming in New York, one of managers of the hotel I'd been staying in told me that they had had someone on the line asking for my hotel phone records, saying they were from my office. My office had made no such call.

Paparazzi

18. Being photographed at a premiere or at a showbiz type restaurant is of course to be expected. By merely going to those places it is pretty clear to me that you are giving tacit consent to be photographed. Being ambushed outside one's home or followed in your car is, I would argue, intrusive. Having photographers deliberately position themselves to get shots up your girlfriend's skirt as she gets out of a car is pretty sickening. (They or the paper which buys the picture will sometimes digitally remove underwear so that they can run an "X goes commando" story). But what is totally unacceptable is having your girlfriend and her child or children ambushed as the children come out of school, and often chased at high speeds. With the children upset and crying. And the photographer continuing to take pictures even after the distraught mother has begged him not to.
19. One girlfriend's 6 year old child was so traumatised by the constant and frightening attention of paparazzi that he ended up a nervous wreck with nails bitten down to the quick. The girlfriend had to move out of London, taking the child out of his school.
20. There's a difference between newspaper staff photographers and the newer breed of paparazzi that have emerged in recent years, particularly since the explosion in celebrity culture, and the advent of digital photography which has made the technology easy. The former will occasionally show some ethics. The latter are ruthless and almost never show any mercy or ethics. The

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police have told me that they often have criminal records. They work for agencies of the kind that many papers, in the wake of Princess Diana's death, swore they would stop buying pictures from. It was a promise that was of course broken within a few months.

21. I should admit straight away that I have on occasion confronted these photographers both physically and verbally. As a result I have been arrested twice, and on one occasion had my car Stanley knifed over every surface.

Hacking

22. I realise that will be fully investigated in Part 2 of the Inquiry, but here is a brief resume of my encounters with it thus far.
23. I became suspicious and somewhat paranoid from about 2000 onwards because the press sometimes seemed to know odd details of my life, particularly when I was in my relationship with one particular girlfriend. We wondered if a friend or an assistant was leaking information.
24. Warnings started to come through from media lawyers about how to protect privacy. They advised having cars swept for tracking devices, and they warned clients (as well as their friends and families) to be careful with Bluetooth devices, and to change their mobile phone numbers frequently. Above all, they advised changing the default code settings on voicemail systems.
25. Then in about 2004, out of the blue, a policeman asked to see me. He was from the Information Commissioner's office (if I remember rightly). He told me that they had arrested a private investigator, and that his notebooks contained many of my personal details – address, phone numbers, PIN codes etc. And those of friends and family. I asked him who the PI had been working for and he answered that it appeared to be most of the British press. I asked him what was going to happen. He told me to stand by, and they would come back to me. Nothing ever happened. I now understand that this PI was Steve Whittamore, and that this was the investigation called Operation Motorman, which culminated in the Information Commissioner's report,

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"What Price Privacy?"

26. In late 2010 I had a chance encounter with an ex News of the World Features editor, Paul McMullan. He boasted to me about phone hacking at the paper, including of my own phone, and about payments to the police and the close relationship between News International and five successive governments. I went back to see him a few months later at his pub in Dover and secretly recorded him telling me the same things. I published the transcript in The New Statesman.

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27. Earlier this year (2011), officers from Operation Weeting came to see me and showed me pages of notes from another arrested PI, Glenn Mulcaire. They showed many of my personal details including mobile phone numbers, PIN numbers and voicemail access numbers.
28. One particular page contained phone details of a girl with whom I'd had a brief but (I thought) entirely private fling, but about which the Mirror and the Mail had written detailed expose stories. The same story had not appeared in the News of the World.
29. This made me wonder if Mulcaire had been working for other papers apart from the News of the World. For that reason I asked my lawyer to obtain a disclosure order on the police to let me see the Mulcaire notes unredacted. In particular I wanted to see the initials in the top corner of the notes. In the event, they turned out to be someone at the News of the World.
30. I have not started a civil suit against News International, largely because I have a feeling that my opinions on these issues might carry a bit more weight if no-one can accuse me of having a financial motive.

My attitude through all this.

31. To begin with, when libelled, or when my privacy was egregiously invaded, I did take legal action. As explained above, I was always a victor in the short run, but a loser in the long run.
32. What I didn't do was openly criticise the worst practices of some papers. This would have been, and still is, to invite brutal

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editorial revenge. If asked about these matters in press conferences around the world I would keep my answers neutral or flippant. This has been the attitude adopted by almost every person I know in this country who has ever become an object of interest or potential profit to the popular press.

33. But as the years wore on I did become increasingly scandalised by the power of these papers, and by their methods. It became clear that, for instance, I couldn't call the police on any matter without a paparazzo or reporter turning up before a policeman.
34. I became increasingly aware of the extent of some papers influence over MP's and government. I watched with distaste the workings of the cabal that was New Labour, Freud Communications, and News International. I watched with astonishment as the Conservative party hired Andy Coulson in 2007. (And I warned George Osbourne at a dinner that he was making a terrible mistake).
35. I heard rumours about how vulnerable people, bereaved families for instance, had had their phones hacked. Or been intimidated or effectively blackmailed. I read the investigative journalism of the Guardian.
36. I ranted to people about these issues in pubs and at parties. Sometimes they would cluck, but more often their eyes would roll. It all seemed too unlikely.
37. Then I met Paul McMullan and all my conspiracy theories seemed to be vindicated. I wrote my article in the New Statesman. I went on Newsnight and tried to point out the speciousness and convenience of some of the attacks being made in the popular press on privacy law within the Human Rights Act. (There was, of course, revenge enacted for this. My arguments were maliciously and cleverly edited in a savage piece of misreporting in the Mail on Sunday).

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38. A month or so after that came the Milly Dowler revelations and I felt the time was right to come completely over the top of the parapet, and to speak out openly, and to try and push for reform. My many interviews on this subject are easily Googable, but largely echo what I say (or will be saying) in this statement.

Third Hat – Student of Popular Papers

39. I'd like this section to take the form of a list of what I see as 10 common myths on this subject.

Myth 1

40. That it is only celebrities and politicians who suffer at the hands of popular papers.
41. To an extent, we already know how false this is. There are victims like the Dowlers, like the families of the little girls murdered at Soham, like the families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan, like the victims of the London bombings. They were all identified as capable of making a commercial profit for certain newspapers, and therefore had their privacy invaded.
42. Then there are the innocent people whose privacy has been stolen simply because they are related to, or work with subjects of commercial interest to some papers. In others words, collateral damage. The mothers and fathers and children of hacking victims who also had their phones hacked. Or who were door-stepped. Or the children who face humiliation in the playground because their father is a footballer whose privacy a paper has stolen, most often not in the public interest, but for profit.
43. And what about the innocent citizens caught up in the periphery of a newsworthy crime and shamelessly monstered by some British papers? What about Christopher Jefferies, the innocent landlord of the murdered Joanna Yeates? Or Robert Murat, to this day receiving death threats with regard to the abduction of Madeleine McCann, a crime of which he is entirely innocent? Or more recently Rebecca Leighton, effectively found guilty in certain papers of mass murder before being judged by the police

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to be entirely innocent? The common factor in all these cases? Money. The stirring up of public outrage, at the expense of the individuals' rights, while potentially jeopardising real justice, simply sold newspapers.

44. And even though the papers admit guilt and are made to pay fines by the courts, as in all three of these cases, they keep doing it because the business model still shows a profit.

Myth 2

45. That egregious abuses of privacy happened only at the News of the World.
46. This is like that paper's old defence of "one rogue reporter". And just as that has been shown to be false so, I am confident, will this. The Information Commissioner's report in 2006 listed 32 newspapers and magazines that had used Steve Whittamore and his illegal dark arts. Dark arts that included blagging and bribing, among others, phone companies and the DVLA.
47. I would also of course point to the words of Paul McMullan when I secretly recorded him. He also concedes that phone hacking wasn't just at the News of the World. According to him, the biggest payers for hacking in the past were the Daily Mail.

Myth 3

48. That in attempting to deal with the abuses of some sections of the press you risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater.
49. I argue that it is not hard for any normal person to distinguish between what is a baby and what is bathwater.
50. In this case, the baby is public interest journalism, of which we are lucky to have some of the best in the world. The bathwater, meanwhile, is not really journalism at all any more, though it once was. It now has at its core a different business model. That model, hiding behind a fig leaf of a little journalism, is the appropriation, usually by criminal means, of British citizens' fundamental human right of privacy. This is done not in the public interest, but for commercial gain. Its methods include

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elements of theft, intimidation, blackmail and extortion. Its victims are often vulnerable.

51. There may be grey areas between these two, but I argue that they are nothing like as grey or as extensive as they are cracked up to be. And that most muddying of the waters between the two is a deliberate strategy on the part of the privacy invasion industry.

52. I say, given that identifying baby and bathwater is not that hard, that we should just take the baby out of the bath. Or rather, I believe the baby is now quite big enough to get out of the bath itself. Why have good journalists agreed for so long to protect the racketeers in their midst? Why have they gone along with the omerta? Why did the exposure of the phone hacking scandal come down to the New York Times, and to the bravery of one UK newspaper and its editor? I would argue that the main reason is the same as the reason for everyone else's silence on this subject for so long. Fear.

Myth 4

53. That any attempt to regulate the press means we are heading for Zimbabwe.

54. First of all it is important to distinguish between the people who genuinely care about press freedom, and those who weep crocodile tears, whose only real concern is the preservation of their lucrative privacy invading business model.

55. Then I would say this.

That of course it would be preferable for the press to be self regulating effectively. But the plain fact is that self-regulation has failed. Failed to prevent phone hacking and other forms of intrusion, failed to protect vulnerable people from press abuse. No one seriously denies this now. I note that even Paul Dacre has started talking about ombudsmen.

56. That to characterise the argument as one between a free press at one end of the scale, and Zimbabwe at the other is simplistic, or irresponsible, or (most often) self-serving. There are, of

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course, many gradations in between those two poles.

57. That it is absurd to label anyone who believes in protecting citizens against the worst abuses of certain newsrooms as a "muzzler" of the press. To me, freedom of the press is just as important as the freedom of individuals to enjoy an expectation of privacy. I am, for instance, very supportive of those who want to protect free speech via reform of our libel laws.
58. That every other important industry in this country that has the power to wreck other people's lives is regulated by more than itself. And our press is often loud (and often right) in its calls for many of those regulations to be tighter. The only truly powerful industry in this country still regulated by itself is the press. Why?
59. That broadcast journalism has been subject to regulation from the start. Our TV news is excellent. And at the House of Lords Committee the other day the BBC (Panorama), Channel 4 and ITV gave evidence. As did John Ware and Ray Fitzwalter, both highly respected and long-standing investigative journalists. All, without exception, were clear that the statutory codes and compliance obligations of the TV regulators did not interfere with their ability to carry out watchdog journalism in the public interest.

Myth 5

60. That current privacy law under the Human Rights Act muzzles the press.
61. If this were so, why has a civil case for breach of privacy never been taken against the Guardian?
62. Why do popular papers' lawyers so seldom even bother to turn up to argue a public interest defence in front of the judge when one of their stories has been enjoined at the eleventh hour? Or indeed in the cold light of next day? Is it because there IS no public interest defence?
63. And if that is so, why do their editorials rail so loudly against so called abuses of these injunctions? Misnaming them as "super-injunctions" when they are merely anonymised to fulfil their

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purpose? Calling them "undemocratic", "backdoor" or "muzzling"? Is it perhaps not about press freedom or public interest at all? Are these editorials merely about protecting a business model? A lucrative racket?

64. Who would we rather decide what was in the public interest and what was merely interesting to the public? Judges? Or the editor of the paper standing to profit from the article in question?

Myth 6

65. That judges always find against the press.
66. Have the judges in the injunction cases relating to personal privacy thus far made many egregious errors? I would argue that they haven't. And that neither have they shown a natural bias one way or the other. The recent case of Rio Ferdinand showed that the judges in these cases will rule for the paper if they feel (rightly or wrongly) that there is a public interest defence.

Myth 7

67. Privacy can only ever be a rich man's toy.
68. One of the objections most often (sometimes correctly) cited against privacy law is that it is expensive to take out an injunction, denying access to justice for people without substantial means. But then why do so many of the popular papers who complain about this also campaign so loudly for the abolition of Conditional Fee Arrangements? Is it that this privacy law is seriously threatening their business model? And that in fact the fewer people that have access to it the better? Particularly as those people who can afford access can then be dismissed as wealthy and privileged?
69. There may well be a problem with access to justice for those without means who wish to defend their privacy rights. The answer is to improve the access not to abolish the justice.

Myth 8

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70. That most sex exposes carry a public interest defence.
71. If a politician campaigns on issues like family values, and he is caught having an extra marital affair, then of course it is right for a newspaper to tell the public.
72. If the England football manager has deemed that the England football captain should be a person of traditional moral virtue, and that same footballer has claimed that he is a "changed person", then you might argue (as the judge did recently) that it is in the public interest to know about his affairs.
73. But it seems clear to me, as it does to most judges, that the vast majority of the public interest defences from popular papers for their sex exposes are bogus. The judges recognise that the motive for printing the story was commercial profit, not public interest.
74. Those papers will argue that Ryan Giggs has traded on his reputation as a faithful family man. In fact, he hasn't particularly. And even if he had it is absurd to think that people are buying Ryan Giggs football boots because of his moral probity. They are buying them because he's a brilliant footballer. (And this is to leave aside questions of the rights of some newspapers to be moral arbiters. How is their moral conscience? Was there anything more comical or grotesque, for instance, than the News of the World, thundering about people's "sordid secrets"?)
75. Some disagree with me, but I would also question most sex exposes of politicians. Unless, as I say, the politician has been elected on the platform of traditional family values, or has publicly criticised or legislated against the private sexual conduct of other people, or is breaking the law or harming anyone. I don't believe that knowing the intimate details of his or her sex life is in the public interest. Some of history's greatest leaders have had colourful sex lives.

Myth 9

76. That people like me want to be in the papers, and need them, and therefore our objections to privacy intrusions are hypocritical.

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77. First of all, for most people I know who are branded "celebrities", the celebrity was not the end in itself. Those people do exist, but I would argue that they are in the minority. Most so-called "celebrities" are just people who happened to become singers, or actors, or footballers, or whatever, and then also happened – through luck sometimes, but also sometimes hard work or talent – to become successful.
78. In my experience they seldom want to be in the papers for the sake of it, to promote themselves. In many cases they hate having to be in them at all. The issue only arises when they have something – a film for example – to promote, when there is a certain pressure to bang the drum a bit in advance of the release. Occasionally this pressure is contractual, but much more often it is simply moral. Typically, the "project" will have involved many people working very hard over long periods of time. And often large amounts of money have been staked. You would simply feel bad if you didn't do a bit of PR.
79. But having said that, it is important to realise how insignificant, in relative terms, PR is to the success or failure of a project. To take films as an example, the most important factor by far is simply whether it works as an entertainment. That's about 85% of it. The marketing and release strategy might be another 10%. PR is merely the cherry on the cake. The final 5%. There have been thousands of examples of films with enormous media attention, wall to wall tabloid coverage, that have gone on to fail at the box office.
80. So if PR is the final, small cherry, how big a part of that cherry is print media? These days, it is considered far less important than TV and radio. Take a film I acted in - "Love Actually". When it came time to organise a press campaign, the ensemble cast nearly all followed my lead in choosing not to give interviews to the UK tabloids. (Most seldom or never did anyway). The film went on to be a huge success, particularly in the UK. I point all this out merely to counter the arguments of certain papers that they make or break films, or actors, who therefore have no right to complain about any abuses.

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81. The only significant argument that can be made for including tabloid papers in a PR campaign these days, is the risk of incurring their wrath by excluding them. Hell hath no fury like a tabloid not invited to a press junket or excluded from premiere party. And so we are back to fear again.
82. It is also very important to remember that when a person DOES do an interview with a paper or magazine they are doing it by consent. It's a form of barter. The paper gets what it hopes will be a boost in sales, and the person gets what he hopes will be some helpful noise about his forthcoming project. It is like bartering 12 eggs for a bale of hay. Or like me selling you a pint of milk for 50p. When the deal is done, it's done. You wouldn't then say, "You sold me your milk, you slut. I'm now entitled to help myself to your milk for ever afterwards".
83. Finally on this subject I should say that I have never in my life "tipped off" the press in the hope of being photographed. I concede that this may happen with a certain type of person who enjoys media attention, or – as is now possible – whose principal source of income is celebrity itself rather than the job that gave rise to that celebrity in the first place. But the behaviour of one person or a group of people does not mean it should be open season on another group of people. And in my experience, the tipping off of the papers is exceptionally rare. I wondered if I was wrong or naive about this, and recently asked ex Daily Star reporter Richard Papiatt what his experience had been. He confirmed that I was right. In my opinion the oft-repeated arguments from popular papers' editors about the hypocrisy of celebrities who secretly court the media is largely specious. And, of course, convenient.

Myth 10

84. That the tabloid press hacks are just loveable rogues.
85. Perhaps they once were. Perhaps a few still are. But I see an awful lot of self glamorising going on, self mythologising. I don't regard the people who tapped Milly Dowler's phone, or ordered the tapping, or allowed it to happen, or covered it up, as lovable rogues. I see them as cowards and bullies. I see them as

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people who have lived above the law for so long that they have started to believe their own propaganda. Power truly does tend to corrupt.

Fourth and Final Hat – Proposer of possible solutions

86. In a nutshell, it seems clear to me that it should be unacceptable and illegal to deprive a person of their fundamental human right to privacy unless there is a real public interest defence.
87. I would therefore think it is critical to preserve our ability to protect our right to defend our privacy under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, brought into UK courts by the Human Rights Act. And I would protect conditional fee arrangements in certain cases where they give people who do not have substantial means access to this civil law.
88. To further extend protection of individuals from the theft of their privacy when there is no public interest defence, I would create a new regulator for the press to replace the PCC. This regulator would be appointed neither by the government nor those it is supposed to regulate. It would have a code of ethics with powers to sanction breaches of that code, either by significant fines or by prominent printed apology (preferably of equal prominence to the offending piece), or both. I would give it a statutory backstop, to make sure this code was ultimately enforceable and that newspaper groups could not just walk away from it.
89. I would make sure that this new regulator protected good public interest journalism as much as it monitored and sanctioned breaches of the code.

Conclusion

90. I don't want to see the end of popular print journalism. And I certainly wouldn't want a country that was fawning to power or success. I like, admire and would always want to protect the British instinct to be sceptical, irreverent, difficult, and to take the piss.
91. And of course a free press is the cornerstone of democracy.

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That is a certainty.

- 92. But what I see in this country are two presses. One which does exactly what a good press should – informing the public, holding a mirror up to society, holding power to account. And then, hiding under the same umbrella, a second press that has been allowed to become something toxic. That has developed a new business model, depending no longer on journalism (as it did once), but on racketeering. A press that has accrued power to itself and mugged British citizens for one of their most basic human rights on an industrial scale. A press that has enfeebled and disgraced our democracy; bribing police, emasculating parliament, and enjoying the competitive sycophancy of five successive governments.
- 93. To some degree this has been the result of too much influence being wielded by individual media owners. Plurality of ownership is something I'm sure this inquiry is looking at and I hope will make strong recommendations on.
- 94. But it has also been the result of straightforward intimidation. Historically, this country has a good record for courage when it comes to standing up to bullies. In my opinion, it needs to rediscover that courage now.

Statement of Truth

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

DATED the 3rd day of November 2011

SIGNED:

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Hugh Grant