

Leveson Inquiry

J. Russell page 1

Exhibits JR 1-5

THE LEVESON INQUIRY

Statement of Jonathan Russell

Jonathan Russell will say as follows:

- 1) I have been Editor of The Herald newspaper in Glasgow and Editor in Chief of Herald and Times Group, which comprises The Herald, Sunday Herald and Evening Times newspapers, since July 2010. Immediately before this I spent approximately four years as an Assistant Editor at the Daily Record and Sunday Mail. Previous jobs have included Scottish Correspondent, then Scottish News Editor and then Scottish Editor of the Daily Mirror, Editor of the Paisley Daily Express and Scottish Bureau Chief of the Mail on Sunday. I have also worked for news agencies and began my career on the Evening Express, in Aberdeen.
- 2) All editorial staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Press Complaints Commission's ("PCC") Editor's Code. A clause in editorial staff contracts states that they are expected to be familiar with it and abide by it. New employees are also issued with a copy of the Code. The Code is also available on the company's intranet site and we have just reissued an up-to-date version of the Code to all editorial staff. Also, managers are reminded to bear the Code in mind when directing staff on issues and stories which have potential to breach the Code. PCC and ethical issues have recently been introduced as an agenda item at the fortnightly meeting of the company's senior editorial team. Our parent company, Newsquest Media Group, also has guidelines on Principles of Ethical Newsgathering, the Responsible Journalism Test, Covert Reporting and Recording and Doorstepping, copies of which are attached to this statement, together with the Code (Exhibits JR1 – 4). These have also been issued to all staff. I also attach a copy of the company's Bribery Act guidelines (Exhibit 5), which are broadly relevant to this theme, and include reference to the company's 'whistleblower' facility.
- 3) As Editor in Chief, I have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all relevant policies are adhered to. We ensure that staff are aware of the relevant policies and, where necessary,

Leveson Inquiry

J. Russell page 2

managers are expected to make specific inquiries and give appropriate direction when issues arise which have potential to breach any of these guidelines.

- 4) To the best of my knowledge, the policies and guidelines referred to above are adhered to in practice.
- 5) Our practices have not changed as a result of the media interest in 'phone hacking, however, this episode has led to reinforcing and reiterating to staff the importance of adhering to the Editor's Code and other guidelines.
- 6) Responsibility for checking sources of information lies to a greater or lesser degree with all staff. Reporters are expected to have made all reasonable checks on the accuracy of information. Desk heads and more senior staff are then expected to challenge reporters on areas which may prove contentious. Production staff are also encouraged to check or bring to the attention of senior staff any information or facts contained in stories which they feel may be inaccurate.
- 7) It is impractical for the Editor of a daily newspaper to be fully aware of all sources of all information which appears in all stories each day. However, where practical and appropriate, I or another senior member of staff will question managers and/or reporters about sources of information which may prove contentious or have potential to conflict with the various guidelines we follow. Other senior staff and managers are expected and encouraged to adopt a similar approach.
- 8) I believe it is important for newspapers to uphold high ethical standards. The 'phone hacking revelations at the News of the World have unfairly damaged the credibility of our entire industry. Readers need to be able to trust what they read in the paper. They also want to feel confident that information they are reading has not been obtained in a way that is likely to cause undue upset or distress to anyone.
- 9) The nature of the job of newspaper editor means that there are always commercial and/or financial pressures. However, I have never come under any such pressures from proprietors to persuade me to act unethically or unlawfully.

Leveson Inquiry

J. Russell page 3

- 10) I have no financial incentive to print exclusive stories. Clearly, exclusive stories are an important currency within newspapers but I have never had any form of remuneration based upon printing these.
- 11) To the best of my knowledge The Herald has never paid private investigators to source stories and/or paid or received payments in kind for such information from the police, public officials or others with access to the same.
- 12) Not applicable, due to the answer to question 11.
- 13) As above.
- 14) As above.
- 15) We regularly pay freelance journalists and press agencies for information and/or stories and, on occasion, may pay some or all of their expenses. These are legitimate professional fees and they are paid in keeping with the practices of national newspapers and the media industry in general. The freelances and agencies we use are expected to abide by the Editor's Code and an appropriate provision is written into freelance contracts.
- 16) As above.
- 17) The balance between the private interests of individuals against the public interest in a free Press is a regular conundrum within all newspapers. These decisions have to be made as they arise on a daily basis. But that is nothing new. The concept of a balance between private rights and public interest is written into UK law as well as being embedded in industry self-regulation in the Code. For instance, it appears in the Human Rights Act, the Data Protection Act, the laws of confidentiality and privacy, and even the laws of libel. Day to day, there are often stories which may cause upset to a member of the public but the decision is made to publish them. Examples of these include murders. It is likely that reading coverage of a loved-one's murder will upset friends and relatives. However, the importance of ensuring the murder is reported to the public and the assistance this can give police in their investigations will generally outweigh these considerations. The same could be

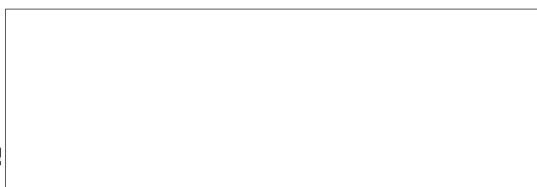
Leveson Inquiry

J. Russell page 4

concluded of other tragedies such as deaths from car crashes or illnesses. Court cases can also involve a balance of these conflicting viewpoints. For instance a witness in a trial may not wish their evidence to be reported to avoid embarrassment. However, the need for open and fair reporting of court proceedings and for justice to be seen to be done will generally outweigh these considerations. The way court reporting restrictions are written in law and applied in practice reflects this necessary balance. However, I do not accept that the idea of freedom, and especially in this context, the idea of free speech, must always be justified by reference to 'the public interest' and that nothing may ever be written unless it is so justified, subject to ultimate judgment by a court. That is not freedom. A newspaper, like any citizen in our open society, is free to act unless the law says it cannot so act (for instance, by hacking into telephones). On top of that lies a layer of moral considerations, and this is properly the preserve of editorial discretion and industry codes. Freedom is not easy; it causes friction and conflict. But it is part of ourselves as social beings and we should not be afraid of it. How far the law should go to restrict that freedom is a question for Parliament, not for me, but the law-makers should remember that freedom, once given up, is very difficult to win back.

18) N/A

Signed



Jonathan Russell

Date 20.10.2011