

IN THE MATTER OF:

AN INQUIRY UNDER THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005

INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS

CHAired BY THE RT HON LORD JUSTICE LEVESON

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF JAMES WILLIAM SCOTT

I, **JAMES WILLIAM SCOTT**, of The People, MGN Limited, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP WILL SAY as follows:

1. I am the Editor of The People, which is published by MGN Limited ('MGN'). MGN is part of Trinity Mirror plc ('Trinity Mirror').
2. I am making this witness in response to a notice dated 3 July 2012 pursuant to section 21(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 (the 'Notice').
3. Where the contents of this statement are within my own knowledge they are true and where they are not within my own knowledge I indicate the source of my belief and believe them to be true.
4. I am not authorised to waive any privilege on behalf of Trinity Mirror (including MGN) and nothing in this witness statement is intended to constitute a waiver of privilege on behalf of Trinity Mirror.
5. I address below the questions in the Notice. I use the Inquiry's numbering and headings.

Question 1: Who you are and your current job title

6. My name is James Scott and I am the editor of The People. I was appointed to this position on 13 June 2012.
7. I started my media career at South West News Service in Bristol in 1994. I then moved to The Sun in 1997. I joined the Daily Mirror in 1999, where I worked as a showbiz reporter until 2002 when I moved to The People as Deputy News Editor. I then moved to the Sunday Mirror as News Editor in 2004. I was appointed Deputy Editor of the Sunday Mirror in 2004 and held this position for the eight years before taking up my current post of editor of The People.

Lord Black has submitted to the Inquiry a proposal for "a New and Effective System of Self-Regulation"¹. In his submission, Lord Black states:

"Responses to the industry consultation from within an extremely diverse set of businesses have inevitably been varied. Parts of the industry – particularly the regional and periodical press – have been understandably anxious about such

¹ <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Submission-by-Lord-Black-of-Brentwood1.pdf>

substantial change, especially when the current system works well for them (as the Inquiry has heard) and above all for their readers. They have rightly been worried about the potential increase in costs and bureaucracy of a new system. But at the other end of the spectrum, some national publishers have argued for even tougher controls. At the end of the day, therefore, this proposal seeks so far as is possible to balance these views. But there is no doubt to me that the vast majority of the industry sees them as credible, likely to prove effective and that they will take part. Northern and Shell has indicated that it is willing to participate, subject to detailed contract terms."

8. To prepare this witness statement, in the short time allocated by the Inquiry, I have familiarised myself with the proposal provided to the Inquiry by Lord Black, which I understand is in fact a proposal by the Press Standards Board of Finance ('PressBof').

Question 2: To what extent were you personally involved in drawing up this proposal for a new system of self-regulation based on contractual obligations, as now set out by Lord Black?

9. I was not personally involved in drawing up the proposal.

Question 3: How far would you personally, in your capacity as editor, expect to be involved in the final decision as to whether your publication signed up to the contractual obligations envisaged by this system? Please explain in full how that decision would be taken.

10. In my capacity as editor of The People, I would not expect to be involved in the "final" decision as this decision would be a corporate decision which I expect would be taken through Trinity Mirror.
11. I am not in a position to comment on how a "final" decision would be taken. I have been in my position as editor for a very short time and in any event I have not been involved in corporate decision-making.
12. I do not know who at Trinity Mirror would take a "final" decision but I presume that the decision would be taken by the Board or whoever is designated on the Executive Committee. Although I do not know, because I am new to my role, I would anticipate that Trinity Mirror would talk to the editors in considering its decision, at least in relation to principle or practical implications.

Question 4: In so far as you are able to do so, please indicate whether your publication is at present fully ready and committed to enter into these contractual obligations. If it is not at present fully ready and committed, please explain why, and detail any changes that would need to be made to the proposal, any further development to proposal required, or any preparatory steps that would need to be taken at your publication, in order to put it in the position of being fully ready and committed to enter into these obligations. If there are no circumstances in which it would be prepared to enter into obligations of this nature, please explain why not.

- 13. As editor of The People, I am expected to comply with and abide by anything that Trinity Mirror signs up to or anything that Trinity Mirror asks me to abide by. The People has a long and proud history and as editor of The People, I would seek to abide by anything that is agreed by Trinity Mirror and do my best to ensure that the new system is upheld.

Question 5: What specific differences would membership of a system of the kind set out by Lord Black, underpinned by contractual obligations, make to the culture, practices and ethics of your publication?

- 14. In my view, such a new self-regulation framework would probably be a good thing for the industry. The benefits include that breaches of the system would be dealt with relatively efficiently and that a remedy for a person who has been wronged would be relatively quick and cheap.
- 15. As I have only been the editor of The People for a very short period, I am not sure if there would be practical differences in the newsroom, or in my interaction with journalists and the way that journalists report on matters.

Question 6: Is there any other comment you wish to make on the proposal put forward by Lord Black, or on the proposals put forward by others, that are now published on the Inquiry website at <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/about/module-4-submissions>

- 16. The proposals are being dealt with on a corporate level. As editor, I will be interested to follow the proposals.

Signed

James William Scott

Dated: July 2012

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