



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Witnesses: Dominic Cooper, Martin Moore and Iain Overton

Paul Lashmar and Gavin MacFadyen

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Members present

Lord Inglewood (Chairman)
Lord Bragg
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Deech
Baroness Fookes
Lord Gordon of Strathblane
Lord Macdonald of Tradeston
The Bishop of Norwich
Lord Razzall
Lord St John of Bletso
The Earl of Selborne

Examination of Witnesses

Dominic Cooper, General Secretary, Chartered Institute of Journalists, **Martin Moore**, Director, Media Standards Trust, and **Iain Overton**, Managing Editor, Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

Q396 The Chairman: I extend a warm welcome to the three of you, Iain Overton, Dominic Cooper and Martin Moore. I think you know that we are doing an inquiry into the future of investigative journalism, particularly in the context of the scandals that emerged after the so-called Hackgate chapter. A lot of focus is being put on what has happened in the past and consideration is being given to what changes might be made to the wider regulatory and legal framework within which the press operates. In particular, if the press and the media more generally are going to be changing because of economic, social and other factors, we want to make quite sure that we are clear about what we think is going to happen. It is pointless to introduce a lot of changes more widely if they are dealing with regulations and frameworks surrounding an industry that has changed out of recognition. So perhaps I may ask each of you briefly to explain who you are and the modus operandi of the organisations that you are involved with. That might be helpful to the Committee. Perhaps I may start with Iain Overton.

Iain Overton: I am the Editor of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. The bureau is the first not-for-profit body of investigative journalists of its kind in the UK. We are loosely based on a similar model in the US, the ProPublica model, which effectively gives away its information for free. We have a slightly different remit where we have both a desire to bolster investigative journalism, which we have done with a £2 million grant from the David and Elaine Potter Foundation, but we also have a commercial element to what we do. We get commissions from *Channel 4 News*, from *Dispatches*, from *Panorama*, from the BBC to do broadcast journalism. We have worked with all of the major national papers. We have been operating since April 2010. We have had 26 front page stories in that time. We have won an Amnesty Award and a Thompson Reuters Award. We have just been nominated for a Foreign Press Association Award. We have been mentioned around 12,500 times in different articles internationally.

Martin Moore: I am Martin Moore; I am Director of the Media Standards Trust. It is an independent non-partisan charity that fosters high standards in news on behalf of the public. It does that in three different ways: research, development and campaigning. In terms of research, we have done a number of publications—some about media regulation and some about coverage in the press, particularly of international news. In terms of development, we develop online tools for the public to help them navigate the news, particularly Journalisted.com which is an index of all the journalists in the UK writing for the national press and Churnalism.com which helps people distinguish between journalism and churnalism, or press releases. We also do some campaigning. Most recently I was one of the founders of the Hacked Off campaign and continue to run the Hacked Off campaign from the Media Standards Trust. We won a Knight News Challenge Award in 2008 and this year a Prospect Think Tank Award. We also run the Orwell Prize for political writing.

Q397 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: Where does the money come from?

Martin Moore: It is 95% foundation funded, so we have grants from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust; we have two grants from the States, from the MacArthur Foundation and the Knight Foundation, and various other smaller foundations and some individual donations from board members.

Q398 Lord Clement-Jones: Did we have an answer on that from Iain Overton?

Iain Overton: Principally, the Potter Foundation, but we have a number of other smaller grants, both commercial and non-commercial.

Q399 The Chairman: And also they generate income. You generate income when you can, is that correct?

Iain Overton: Yes.

Q400 Lord Clement-Jones: Which foundation?

The Chairman: The Potter Foundation.

Baroness Deech: Is Potter a surname of someone?

Iain Overton: Yes, David Potter and Elaine Potter, who used to work under Harry Evans at *The Sunday Times*.

Q401 The Chairman: Dominic Cooper?

Dominic Cooper: Dominic Cooper, General Secretary of the Chartered Institute of Journalists. Formed in 1884 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1890, we are an independent professional association and a trade union, free from all political ties. The professional side represents our members' interests by campaigning and through submissions to inquiries such as this, and representation on various national organisations such as the

British Copyright Council, training bodies and things of that nature. The trade union side represents our members' interests in the workplace, of course, funded by subscription incomes from our members.

Q402 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: How many members do you have?

Dominic Cooper: We are about 1,500 or so.

Q403 The Chairman: Members of the Committee will ask you a series of questions, which will be addressed, in general, to all of you, but do not feel you necessarily have to say anything if you do not feel it is within your own terms of reference. Some of you may have more things to say about some than some others. We are just interested to hear what you have to tell us. Perhaps I may start with a very general opening question. Will each of you give one or two quick examples of what you really think is good investigative journalism recently, carried out both at national and local levels, or international levels even?

Iain Overton: I would like to start by probably giving a plug for my own organisation but, obviously, I will say that it is good on its own. We did a recent examination of drone attacks in Pakistan, which has had a huge impact in the States particularly. What we did was quite a forensic analysis of the number of attacks that had happened by US drones in Pakistan. Everyone knew that they existed but it was taking the body of evidence that was reported in organisations like Bloomberg and Reuters, and then sending people out to the field to corroborate whether this reporting was accurate or not, and then building up a massive database on the number of attacks.

The end result of that was that we effectively proved that the CIA's declaration that no civilians had been killed in the last 12 months by US drone attacks in Pakistan was not true.

We listed 127 civilian deaths as reported by credible media and backed up by eyewitness accounts on the ground. This has caused quite a huge debate and ended up being a leading editorial in the *New York Times* and a front-page story in the *New York Times*, but what I think makes it very good investigative journalism is that we have created quite a strong follow-on debate from it. Every single day, I get a Google alert on drone attacks in the bureau and, every single day, somebody has picked up on our work and taken it on. So it has, I think, created a bit of a change in the accountability of US foreign policy.

Martin Moore: Just to touch on a few, perhaps, I genuinely thought of this one before I knew that we were going to be sitting on a panel together. I thought that the bureau's investigation into European structural funds last year was fascinating and important. It was a long-term investigation; it was quite a detailed and difficult one. It was looking into some very dry statistics and came out with some remarkable findings about the misuse of funds and the redirection of funds, for example, to the mafia in southern Italy. Certainly in the national press, we all know about the big ones—WikiLeaks and the phone hacking, but also Adam Werritty and others—but also I am very interested in some of the other ones that have been done via new media: Claire Sandbrook—who I know has been in front of you—and her investigation into the state locking up children; and particularly Paul Lewis's investigations into Ian Tomlinson and the death of Jimmy Mubenga. I could go on but I will stop there for the moment.

Dominic Cooper: Just a couple: the most recent one, of course, in the national press would be the cricketers who have just been jailed for their part in the betting scandal. A year or two ago, we had child organ removal, unbeknown to the parents, when they died, that was taken up by *Panorama*, I believe. And, on a local level, the *Essex Chronicle* with the Broomfield Hospital financial situation, which was exposed to be worse than declared at the time.

Q404 Lord Razzall: We have had some evidence from local newspaper editors that investigative journalism really is the heart-blood of their newspapers, and they would not really exist without being able to expose local stories or local scandals. But we also have evidence that more than 50% of people say that they get their local news from TV or radio. In that context, do you think local newspapers are particularly important for investigative journalism?

Dominic Cooper: Yes, would be my answer. Very often, stories are broken on a local level before they hit national anyway. Of course, local journalists will have a very close connection to their communities, who they serve, and so they are honour-bound to make sure that accuracy is key. Then stories very often spill over into news and radio anyway.

Martin Moore: In answer to your question, I think many local newspapers still do investigative journalism, and historically they have been sources of investigative journalism, but I think it is becoming less and less so. I think a lot of local newspapers are being hollowed out. Look at what is happening in many papers. We have a project in Wales, so I know more about Wales than most areas, but the degree to which journalists have been taken out of the system is remarkable. Media Wales publishes the *Western Mail*, the *Echo* and a series of local weeklies in the valleys. In 1999 they had 700 editorial and production staff; they now have 136—a drop of 81%. If you look at some of the titles in the Welsh valleys around Rhondda, Pontypridd and Merthyr, there are seven titles, six senior reporters and five trainees, so that is fewer than two reporters per newspaper. They are, if you like, on a hamster wheel, desperately trying to keep the paper afloat and to keep the stories in the paper. That makes it very difficult to spend any length of time on one story or to do an investigation, particularly if the investigation might not come off and might not be a success.

Q405 Lord Razzall: Taking Dominic's point, the evidence we have had is that the role of local newspapers in finding out stories and then passing them on to the national media is shrinking very rapidly. Would you agree with that?

Dominic Cooper: I think it is most certainly an essential part of the chain. Martin is right: the recent cutbacks we have seen in local newspapers have diminished staff to a desperate level, almost, in many respects. That does not mean that the journalists on the paper are not still desperate to get out there and forage for their stories, because, by their very nature, that is what they want to do, of course. Does it play a declining role? Yes, I suspect, in the sense that there are fewer journalists doing it. In that sense, yes, but it is not in the sense of its importance as part of the chain.

Iain Overton: We did a major examination of local council spending last year, and one of the things which kept on coming up was concerns that local council advertising in local papers may, to some degree, influence editorial decisions on investigating local council misspend of funds.

Q406 Lord Razzall: I am sure that is right.

Iain Overton: Whilst it is very hard to pinpoint hard examples of that, certainly there were reactions. If you, on a national level, picked out certain councils, you certainly knew that the press officer of the council would be on to the local paper with quite a strong response in the local paper that probably was not necessarily reflective of the truth.

Q407 The Chairman: How widespread do you think that is?

Iain Overton: Something I specialised in when I was working at *Channel 4 News*, when I was commissioning there, was to take mass freedom of information requests of every single local council and then to try to pick up a national picture. Then we would press release it and

then I would send out the press release to all of the local papers. Five years ago, when I was doing that, I would get tremendous pick-up. I would say, over time, if I drew a graph, the pick-up for critical stories against local councils as a consequence of my national investigation has declined, and I can only surmise that either it is a tension of just not enough man hours to respond to the story or an editorial decision not to pursue too critical stories.

Q408 The Chairman: Do you think that of all local newspapers? I declare an interest in the sense that I chair a group of local newspapers, so I am actually interested.

Iain Overton: I do not necessarily think all but I think it would be a very useful exercise to look. If somebody could examine amount of sponsorship with amount of critical coverage, I think you would probably see a correlative link.

Martin Moore: I can give a specific example from the project that we work on in South Wales. We have a joint project in Port Talbot with Cardiff University. The reason we chose Port Talbot specifically was because the *Port Talbot Guardian* closed two years ago, so there is now no local paper. There are no professional journalists based out of Port Talbot, although the *South Wales Evening Post* does have a couple of stories about Port Talbot generally in there. One can look at specific, what are clearly public interest, stories that have been uncovered.

They are building the biggest biomass plant in Europe in Port Talbot, and there is quite a lot of public discontent about it; almost no coverage at all—certainly no investigative coverage. There was a waste plant at Crymlyn Burrows that was running for almost eight years, and there were many local complaints about the pollution, about the smell and about lots of associated health problems, and there was no reporting of it—or virtually no reporting of it—and certainly no action taken such that, eventually, the Environment Agency came in and it failed it on almost all its tests in 2008-09, and it closed. It is very hard, because it is the

problem of the tree falling in the forest: if it is not reported, how do you know it is news? Certainly from the experience we have had in South Wales, lots of important news is going unreported.

Q409 Lord Clement-Jones: That is because they are worried about their advertising income.

Iain Overton: No, because there is no one to cover it.

Q410 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: The fact that I switch to broadcasting does not imply that we have given up the ghost on the local press. Let us leave the BBC on one side, because it has public funding. If we look at ITV and commercial local and regional radio, how can we stop them going the same way as the local press, according to your evidence, would appear to have gone? How can we preserve investigative journalism, or even sustain it there?

Iain Overton: I think it is incredibly difficult. You say not to mention the BBC within this, but I think you have to look at the issue of—

Q411 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: No, I am aware of it; it is just that they do not face the problem because they have the funding.

Iain Overton: That funding probably should be looked at more competitively, to see whether it could be put out to tender and whether commercial organisations could almost apply for funding to run local channels. Every news organisation is being hollowed out. I used to work at ITN, and the pension problems of ITN prohibit investment in local journalism. It is a fundamental problem that there is no easy answer to. Whether governmental funding or maybe a sea change in Ofcom regulations about sponsored news,

albeit you would want editorial independence, or even philanthropic funding going into it, I think there needs to be a different discourse. One of the interesting elements is not just on broadcast but looking at online journalism. The online journalism that is state-sponsored for the BBC is ring-fenced, and I do not see why it should be ring-fenced. The money that goes into online journalism should, just as it is for broadcast journalism, be open to independent pitching for projects, just as I can pitch to make a *Panorama*, for instance.

Q412 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Can I press you slightly on Government funding? When you mentioned commercial sponsorship, you obviously wanted that hedged round to make sure it was not influencing the programme. Why would you not have the same concern, almost, about Government funding? Does that not nullify criticism of the Government?

Iain Overton: No, I do think there is a problem, and certainly there are subject matters which I commission running the independent bureau, which I know that, if I take through to the BBC, they will not touch it. An example is that I had access to the WikiLeaks Iraq war logs. Having met Julian Assange, I had access to all this information. I took it through to the BBC and they would not touch it with a bargepole. I think they were hugely concerned about the political fallout for being seen to be in bed, so to speak, with WikiLeaks, even though I think it was a very important journalistic story.

Q413 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: One could argue that they might be behaving responsibly, because, after all, the publication of that put several people's lives in danger.

Iain Overton: Not with the Iraq war logs, actually, because the Iraq war logs had heavy redaction, and I went through the door saying this was conditional on extensive redaction on the part of WikiLeaks, so I do not think that argument holds sway.

Q414 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: I just want to follow through on that, both to Iain and to Martin. Is there any evidence that the BBC ran scared of the phone hacking scandal because they were afraid of the Murdoch press influence?

Iain Overton: Having spent a lot of my time in broadcast, I think there is this understated pact about the broadcast media reporting on the media. I have heard editors actually say, “It is a media story. People are not interested”. Tom Giles, the editor of *Panorama*, to give him credit, has commissioned three *Panoramas*, I think—one is coming out soon—on the phone hacking, so they have done their fair bit. I am sure that the so-called governmental response—the press complaints response—to the initial *Guardian* investigation may have tempered the view of editors in the BBC. I certainly think, though, there are instances where the BBC could have been more rigorous in its pursuit of an investigation. I think of its relationship on the Trafigura story, where it actually, I think, had an out-of-court settlement with Trafigura. *Newsnight* did a story and then they were sued and then they paid £20,000. There are times when the BBC decides not to take on major litigious stories because of fear of criticism that it is spending too much public money on fighting difficult court cases. Of course, quality investigative journalism often necessitates complicated court cases.

Martin Moore: It has been better this year, and I really think the turning point was September of last year, when the *New York Times* published the story. After the *Guardian* published the July 2009 revelations, the BBC went briefly into the story but did not—certainly explicitly—investigate it in great depth. It took the *New York Times* to open the floodgates and the BBC then felt it had the licence to go and do more proper investigation.

Q415 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Mr Moore, can I stick with you? Given the time of year it is, I am tempted to light the blue touch-paper and retire, because you are quoted as

saying that the Government's plans for local television were "technologically myopic, economically unsustainable, highly unimaginative, and will do almost nothing to address the underlying local investigative news problem." I do not know whether you want to expand on that.

Martin Moore: I was being euphemistic. No, I think it is a great shame, actually, because it is not a huge amount of money in the larger scheme of things, but with the amount of money that is being spent, so much more could be done—so many more constructive things could be done.

Q416 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Can you instance some? If you had control of the money, what would you do?

Martin Moore: Shall I just respond to the problems first?

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Please.

Martin Moore: On a technological front, it is relying on these temporary GIS transmitters. The coverage is extremely sporadic and is not aimed at the areas of greatest need. It does not incentivise experimentation with business models, which is one of the key problems with local news. We need to reinvent the business model, if you like. It wastes money on capital investment, when the investment ought to be in innovation and people. To give an example on a much smaller scale, in the States, not the government but foundations—particularly the Knight News Foundation, and some others—have set up grants and competitions for people essentially to reinvent news at a local level. The Knight News Challenge Award does exactly this: they give away \$5 million a year to about a dozen-plus different projects.

The impact of these projects has been enormous—the ripple effects have been massive—because each project is an experiment. Each project is designed to do something different. They set clear parameters etc, but imagine if you had an innovation fund that people could

compete for or appeal to. The grant really need not be very big at all. Often, we are talking about journalists who are either being let go or do not see any future in the industry. Were there to be an innovation fund, where they could experiment with new models of producing news, of distributing news or of coming up with new business models, that would be—that overused quote—a thousand flowers blooming. I think there would be a huge amount of innovation and experimentation, which is exactly what we need right now.

Q417 The Chairman: I have a question for Iain Overton. To go back to your earlier remarks, when you were talking about the malign influence of the local authority on the local newspaper when there was such a large amount of advertising money going into the local newspapers, if you were to have some form of public funding, do you anticipate that something similar would occur at national level, or even at local level, criticising central Government? Obviously, one of the roles of the press, as the fourth estate, is to criticise Government where it thinks things are going wrong.

Iain Overton: In the early days, you probably would not have that problem. Obviously, over time, people become entrenched and relationships get formed, and maybe editorial agendas get blunted. I think that is possibly the problem with the BBC over a period of time: they have a long memory and it may mean that, on occasion, they decide not to pursue politically sensitive issues. There are, of course, notable exceptions. I think it would very much be based on the organisation doling out the money and the culture of that organisation. If the culture of that organisation was, “Here is the fund; do with it as you will. There is no comeback; do not worry”, then that would preserve that independence much longer. Clearly, if the culture of the organisation giving out the money was, “There are caveats to this and you have to have certain processes if you are going to do certain investigations” etc, etc, then that may blunt it more quickly. I think, ultimately, it will be

down to a cultural approach. If, from the get-go, there was, “This is meant to equip you with teeth”, then it could be filled with teeth.

Q418 Lord Clement-Jones: I want to come back to the funding model point in a minute, but I think one of you have made the point about the impact of council newspapers—I think it was probably you, Dominic, for the Chartered Institute—on local news media. Has that been quite dramatic, and do you think the new Government rules will make any difference to that in terms of allowing more local media to survive?

Dominic Cooper: The impact has been dramatic. In many respects, the publications that they produce are simply passed off as independent newspapers, unless you read the very small print and, in many respects, they took in advertising as well, which possibly took away significant strands of advertising from local media in that area. The impact has been significant. The Government’s reaction to it and their changed Publicity Code has had an impact, but not in some areas. There is still evidence of local government newspapers flouting that Publicity Code, which we are campaigning on still.

Q419 Lord Clement-Jones: That is still something of importance.

Dominic Cooper: Yes, there is a publication down in Greenwich that we are still fighting, and one or two others around the table.

Q420 Lord Clement-Jones: Martin and Iain have started to answer the question, but given that newspaper revenues are in significant decline, both locally, as we have heard, and nationally, are there any new funding models or ownership structures which might help secure the future of newspapers?

Dominic Cooper: We have looked at this on a few occasions. A couple of years ago, the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee did an investigation into local newspapers. When we started asking our members about other funding models that they could work with, they were very keen to point out that their independence is seen among their local community, because they are completely apolitical, if you like. They are not tied to any funding model from any particular political influence. It comes back to something that was touched upon earlier: the notion that the story is somehow lost because of political influence. We do not find that necessarily the case. It is largely manpower these days, where stories get lost, rather than that.

Q421 Lord Clement-Jones: How are you going to fund that? Martin has mentioned an innovation fund; I think Iain mentioned philanthropic sponsorship—that kind of thing.

Dominic Cooper: We have talked about certain tax breaks that might be available to local publications to help them through this particular difficult period. We still do not know how it is going to play out. The ad spend has gone online in the short term. Whether it will stay there for ever, we do not yet know. It may be that, in some stage in the future, advertisers look for a combined online/print combination linked to a renowned brand which local newspapers will be able to key into again.

Q422 Lord Clement-Jones: Do you mean that the ownership rules might make a difference?

Dominic Cooper: Yes.

Martin Moore: I think we have to be careful here, because I think the traditional economic model—it has been said many times but just to say it again—that was really a money-maker for local news in the latter half of the 20th century is broken and it will not come back again.

I think this is structural, not cyclical. Therefore, one has to look at new funding models and new ways in which to maintain local news. One of the key things to say is that there is no silver bullet. I do not think there is anything specific that one can say, "That will do it". Look particularly at the American models, because they have, as I say, experimented in many different models, whether it is through foundation funding or through mixed funding. There is a rather innovative man called David Cohn, who created Spot.U.s, which is public funding, if you like. People donate towards particular stories. The news organisation start-up we are working with in South Wales is doing a similar thing. The key, I think, is that, first, it will be mixed and, secondly, it will not be profitable in the way it once was. In many areas, actually, it will not be profitable at all.

Q423 Lord Clement-Jones: It is more like a community service, is it? Is that what you are thinking?

Martin Moore: Exactly. In a way, one has to think of how to sustain local news and local investigative journalism in a world in which it is not profitable to do that sort of journalism. It certainly cannot be cross-subsidised by the other types of journalism. One has to be quite creative about that and think about indirect subsidies and about innovation funds. One of the keys, to me, in a way, is actually lowering the costs of doing journalism, as opposed to necessarily subsidising it, to a level where it becomes much easier for almost anyone to do it, as long as they have the motivation and the time.

Q424 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: Some of the big international chains that took over British regional newspapers were demanding very high profit margins from them. Those newspapers are already subsidised by Government because they do not pay VAT. So, assuming that it is not totally destroyed, is there not a way of taking the survivors, looking at

the VAT and saying, “You must invest some of that in journalism rather than taking it back to the United States” or elsewhere?

Dominic Cooper: I think that is a very valid point.

Q425 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: Has that been explored at all?

Martin Moore: Certainly, the VAT question is being discussed generally because it is being discussed also in the whole area of press self-regulation and how one motivates people to become part of the system. It is certainly worth looking at. The difficulty is that the four big players, who have two-thirds-plus of the local market, are so loaded with debt, particularly someone like Johnston Press, that pulling the rug out is liable to make them topple over. That is not to say one should support the incumbents, because I think, as you say, what the incumbents have done, certainly over the last decade or so, is to cut costs viciously, such that editorial is down at almost ground zero. I do not think that subsidising the incumbents is a good idea, but equally one needs to think of the implications of the different mechanisms that you use.

Q426 Baroness Deech: Can I ask what the demographic is of local press readership?

Martin Moore: Print? Old.

Q427 Baroness Deech: Is one flogging a dead horse? Maybe one should simply give up.

Dominic Cooper: Just a point on that: we do not quite hold such a pessimistic view as Martin about the future, necessarily. We have seen this sort of thing before. Video was going to kill the radio star, and local radio was going to kill local newspapers before that. Local newspapers survived and we feel that they probably will survive here as well. Once the markets have settled, we will be in a better position to make a firm judgment.

Martin Moore: I am not pessimistic. I think the opportunities to do journalism are amazing—they are better than they have ever been. I think it is a remarkable age for journalism. I think that what one has to focus on is the journalism rather than on the medium. I think there has been too much concentration on print versus online versus television versus x, and particularly at a local level I think one has to think about how on earth one can maintain and sustain the functions that we have taken for granted, essentially, which is particularly around informing local communities, keeping power accountable and cohering local communities, which is, I think, something that is often forgotten.

Q428 Lord Clement-Jones: Iain, do you want to just add to that, because obviously you are funded in various different ways?

Iain Overton: Just a couple of points. First, while the readership of local newspapers is old, possibly people's reading habits change as they get older, and we all get old, and old people vote. I do not think you can be pessimistic on that level. With regard to the issue, I think an excellent point Martin made was about the issue of training. This is where something rather constructive could be done. For instance, when I was working at ITN, I equipped a team of self-shooting reporter/broadcast editors—basically, one-man crews who would go out, put a camera on a tripod, film their piece to camera, then go back to the newsroom, edit it, and then it would be out on the evening news. That was *More4 News*. Unfortunately, *More4 News* was cut by Channel 4, and every single person who used to work on that has now gone on to senior jobs in Channel 4. If the BBC or other state-funded parties had a major responsibility for training, you would get a lot more bang for your buck.

I think there should be greater pressure on young journalists entering the marketplace now to be multi-skilled. We are talking very much generally here about the issue of print, broadcast and online. I do not see it in that way. One of the major funding methods is

multiplatform. It is collaborative and multiplatform. Multiplatform means that, when I get a story out, I try to get it out across as many media as possible. If you can get funding from different media to the central hub, then all the better. There might also be a commercial possibility in local news stories. When they get a national news story, then maybe they should act on that more and be able to sell it to Reuters and Bloomberg and what have you. I do not think that enough commercial opportunities are explored.

I encourage all the journalists who come through my door. I say, "First and foremost, you are an entrepreneur and then you are a journalist, because if you are not an entrepreneur you will never be able to get your stories out. You have to be in, this day and age, incredibly active and involved. You have to have your own blog, your own Facebook page, your own MySpace and all the rest, and you need to be getting your stories out as an independent individual". There is possibly a bit of an issue with the way we are talking about this, both in terms of structure and in terms of identifying journalists as part of their main skill, whether it is broadcast or online. I think they are just journalists.

Q429 The Chairman: I have a question for Martin Moore. You said that you thought it was important not to prop up the existing incumbents of local newspaper franchises. Does it follow, then—I am saying this entirely neutrally—that it would be desirable for the over-indebted monoliths to go bust or to sell them all off, and the fragments could then be reconfigured in a better way for the future?

Martin Moore: No one wants to wish the end of something, because creative destruction could be a very destructive thing. In particular, there are an awful lot of local newspapers that are trying their hardest and working their hardest to get the news out still. Having said that, I think there are quite a lot of areas which are, in some ways, giving a false impression. You have the impression that there are these titles covering a whole geographic area, when,

actually, there may be a dozen or two dozen titles but there may be two or three editors covering all the titles and only a smattering of journalists at each title, such that, essentially, most of the news—and particularly the accountability journalism—is not actually being done. That is giving a very false impression. We certainly need to be aware of that, because often in the past judgments have been made by looking at the number of titles and saying, “Actually, the number of titles of local newspapers has not gone down that much, so local news is probably still doing okay”. I think that is a very false impression and it is one that has particularly gone the other way in the last five years. Claire Enders, the other day, said that there had been 40% job losses in local newspapers over the last five years, so almost half of the jobs gone. That is not just journalists—that is other staff as well—but it gives an impression as to the extent to which this is happening.

Q430 Lord St John of Bletso: You have spoken about the various funding models and, of course, you have spoken about the need to cut costs in print and media, but since the start of the recession we have seen the internet sector and the television all recover, but printed media seems to be on a steady decline. Iain made the point that there is a real take-up by adults of the need for media. How important is it to protect the future of printed press and do you foresee a time when the majority of news outlets will be digital only?

Martin Moore: Again, I come back to the point about protecting and sustaining journalism rather than necessarily a medium. I do not think it is good to jump on the back of any one particular medium, whether it is digital, print or broadcast, because I think, as we have seen with radio and television, they do not destroy the previous media—they add to it, so you get a patchwork approach. I think the same thing will happen here. If you look at places where they have used print and digital creatively together, they enhance one another. There was a fascinating local news project in the Czech Republic called Naše Adresa, where they did

exactly that. We are seeing that particularly with weekly magazines. The *New Statesman* and the *Spectator* now have been much more thoughtful about the way they integrate digital and print. If your question is, “Should one subsidise print and print costs?” again I think the key is to look at how one sustains journalism and the ways in which to do that, rather than the medium.

Dominic Cooper: From our point of view, we would say it is essential for two different reasons. In the course of our work a couple of years ago, it was easy to see that there is still an element of the public that do not use the internet as their main source of news, so digital-only is very difficult to see. Not only that; there is a difficulty with long-form journalism online. If we look at the studies, online browsers read no more than 250 words of a story, because, after that, their eyes start bleeding and things of that nature, so they either print it out or read it somewhere else.

Q431 Lord St John of Bletso: Looking ahead, with the rapid take-up of Android smartphones and iPads, surely this will further accelerate the decline of copy sales.

Martin Moore: It will, absolutely, and that is what the market believes. The market believes that print will fall off and fall off. But just to give some detail around that example in the Czech Republic, at Naše Adresa they found a location in the heart of each town—in the town square—and opened a café. The café had to be economically sustainable, so it had to pay for itself. Then they put three or four journalists in the café and they were doing their journalism. Of course, it meant that they could meet people all the time on a daily basis, and they were producing reports with people bringing stories to them. They recognised that, actually, the reasons that people often buy a print paper, particularly at a local level, is because they want to see a photograph of the school sports day; they had a page which was newborn babies. There are certain things that print does extremely well; there are other

things that digital does extremely well; and it is about thinking about what they do well and trying to use them to plump each other up, if you like. I entirely agree with you: I think the market does not think there is any future for print, but I think, necessarily, it will continue.

Iain Overton: There is probably also something about the vanity of ownership in that holding a copy of the *Economist* or the *FT* under your arm on the Tube probably says more to you than holding a tablet. I think that, ultimately, this boils down to the issue of exclusivity, in terms of, “Is the person you are going to sign up to”, whether that is a physical payment for a paper or an online wall, “going to offer you something exclusive?” I think there has been a bit of a sea change of late. Three or four years ago, there was a general trend to get rid of investigative journalism in newsrooms, because I think there was a belief that it was expensive and it was painful and all the rest. I think there has been a small sea change in the last 12 months, of which the editors of both the *Economist* and the *FT* have stated that I have played a small part in the fact that I worked with the *FT* on the European Union structural funds and, shortly thereafter, they hired an investigations editor. The *Economist* has done the same. The editor said that it was partly to do with the interest that the bureau was generating.

There is a newspaper in Sweden called *Svenska Dagbladet*. The general Swedish market has declined by 12% over the last five years, but *Svenska* has increased its physical copy sales by 17%. The reason it does so is because 40% of its copy is produced in advance. I think we are getting into an age where people accept that, if there is a big news story out there, everyone is going to be getting it—you are going to get it on Google, you are going to get it on BBC News, or whatever it is—but it is the exclusive story that generates the attraction. I am assuming that the *Guardian* is pursuing the American market to see whether the advertising revenue matches their costs, but if, with their ludicrously high debt levels, the *Guardian* cannot sustain that, we may get to a period where the *Guardian* follows the Murdoch

example and sets up a pay wall. We are probably going to end up in a period where you will have to pay for exclusive media and it will get to a point where the ABIs of this world—people who are the marketers' dream—will pay for access to exclusive information, which is why the *Economist* and the *FT* are doing quite nicely, thank you.

Q432 The Earl of Selborne: You referred to a trend that was perceived 12 months ago for investigative journalism to be cut because it was seen to be too expensive and I think we have recognised that the share of news disseminated by newspapers will certainly remain for a minority. Therefore, if investigative journalism is to be an important component of the press, what can be done to ensure that the newspapers can afford it? Is there any way of reducing fixed costs?

Iain Overton: I would like to refer to what was probably a unique undertaking—the first of its kind; it was quite experimental. When I did the European Union structural funds, I spent a lot of time getting all the information together, which actually refers to a question which I think we are going to be asked later and that I will come back to. At the point of dissemination of that information, I did a tie-in with *File on 4*, who ended up paying for a journalist and the cost of that journalist to travel to Italy to look at the mafia. I tied in with the *Financial Times*, who provided a team of data analysis and graphic designers, and I tied in with Al Jazeera English, who I did a half-hour documentary for. I had three revenue streams of print, radio and TV broadcast coming in to the investigation. Because of the initial quite high costs of the story, it did not actually match my costs and I had to subsidise it to the tune of around 30%, but nonetheless I did bring in a lot more money than I would have done had I just gone with one outlet.

Q433 The Earl of Selborne: When you say you subsidised it to the tune of 30%, where does this cross-subsidy come from?

Iain Overton: That came from the Potter Foundation, so the organisation was funding me. Partly because I have this philanthropic backing I have the ability to push the limits of investigative journalism further; that is, I give it an extra three weeks. Possibly, if I was a bit more commercially up against the wall, I might have cut my losses and then gone prematurely. But that is one of the fundamental problems that is occurring with broadcast journalism as it is today. The fixed amount of money given for investigations has not risen massively—it certainly has not matched inflation over time—and more and more money is going on the production and less money is being spent on research. I have heard of major investigations by *Panorama* and *Dispatches*, where, actually, the amount of research is a matter of weeks rather than months, and therein lies a problem. One of the challenges is to persuade commissioners, particularly commissioners with deep pockets—the broadcasters—to accept that there should be a greater ability on the part of the people they are commissioning to increase the funding of that commission through getting it out via print and other media.

Q434 The Earl of Selborne: To what extent are part of your fixed costs the subsequent legal costs? We heard an example of a *Panorama* programme where the legal costs were actually more than the cost of commissioning the programme. Does this occur in your world?

Iain Overton: Absolutely, and I very rarely publish controversial stories without teaming up with a major player. I hope that, if Carter-Ruck is going to come at somebody, they are going to come at the *Guardian* rather than myself. They have come at me a couple of times but I just do not answer the emails and they go away. The challenge, though, is what

happens when you come across particularly litigious stories that broadcasters do not want to engage with because they are very complicated. For instance, if we wanted to analyse some of the banks in this country, we would be challenging organisations that could kill us in a second with their chequebook. A lot of people ask, “Is it worth the challenge? Is it worth the battle?”. Therein lies a problem. It is a fundamental problem, yes.

Martin Moore: Perhaps I may respond to that question on a different level—on a more local level—because I think it is a critical question. I sat down with the woman who is leading this new start-up in Port Talbot and said, “What would help you to make your news organisation more sustainable and to keep it going?” She said, “An awful lot of it is help in terms of getting legal advice and getting financial advice”. If they get into any problems, they do not really have anywhere to go. If they get a threat, they just have to drop the story. In terms of lowering costs for shared facilities and for business advisers and mentors—this is where I think some quite important advances have been made, both at a local and a national level—it is about lowering the cost of getting hold of the information itself.

The Government just this year has released COINS, the central Treasury database of all spending. That is more of a national thing than a local thing, but all councils are having to release spending over £500, which is a significant advance. There could be an awful lot more; for example, if you were to live-stream local council meetings. At the moment you cannot even film many of them. There are ways such that people can do journalism at a much lower cost in terms of both money and time, because that is also central to being able to do it.

Q435 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: I would like to explore just a bit further with you, Iain Overton, just how these partnerships work. You are obviously dealing with organisations that have very big budgets, whether it is Pearson, the BBC or Channel 4. How

do you get the deal there? Will they put you on a retainer, are they paying you by the hour, or are they making an objective assessment of how good a story it is? You are obviously being short-changed somehow and your money will run out from the Potters, presumably, unless you get a real working relationship with them.

The second part of relationships is: if you look at the universities, although you have 25,000 potential foot soldiers there that you could be using, can you actually set up a proper relationship with universities? While they will give you independence and integrity as a validation, they will run very scared of any problems—of you upsetting the people in power over their educational policy or just costing them money or getting them into controversies through litigious stories. Two partnerships: we had a lot of hope for universities as partners when we started this. Is that feasible and are you just being short-changed by the big players here?

Iain Overton: To some degree, I think I am short-changed, particularly with print. With broadcast, you can actually make a so-called profit. For instance, I turned the Iraq war logs into a *Dispatches* and we were able to sell that *Dispatches* to 26 countries round the world. So international investigations can, if there is the right sort of story, bring back the income. It is all about rights ownerships. There is a problem with broadcast, though. The BBC's refusal to give people international rights does hinder quality investigative journalism. You go through to the BBC and you do a *Panorama*. The BBC keep everything and that prohibits your international sales. It does not account for all the back office work that got you to the position to go through the pitch in the first place.

With regard to the *Sunday Times*, for instance, they pretty much have a fixed rate at which they will pay for an investigation. Their feeling is, "We have all these fixed costs of our own. We have all these in-house journalists. It has to be pretty good for you to warrant a cheque from us". I am sure that they are short-changing me, even in this debate, but I am told that

the amount they are willing to spend on something might be £2,500 for a story that you could have spent three months on, but you can still get around that. I am toying much more with collaborations in other languages. For instance, I did my European Union structural funds. I ended up selling that to the French and the Germans. When I did the Iraq war logs, I sold all of my copy to *Le Monde*, so translations are obviously an option. This is fine when it is an international, big story, but when you are dealing with a national British story, then that model really is hindered.

There could be an argument for a small organisation or a mid-sized organisation mixing international investigations with local investigations, and the international sales then fund the local sales. I know a production company that made a film called *The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan* and that made a huge amount of international sales. That pretty much funded that company for a future year, so there are opportunities to make profits. I have had only a small number of stories that have funded themselves, and that is generally when you go through to one player and they agree to match your costs. For instance, with Al Jazeera on bespoke stories, they pay for all of my costs, or *Channel 4 News*' development budget had paid for all of my costs.

Q436 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: With regard to your partnership with the universities, have you created a distance from City University?

Iain Overton: The timidity, to which I think you were referring earlier, for fear of upsetting the powers that be certainly was a factor when I first talked to City University. City University have granted me peppercorn rent for my bureau in return for me giving hands-on experiences for some of the people leaving the Journalism course. I have a number of interns and researchers working for me who have all come from that course, and that is the

quid pro quo. With regard to teaming up with academics, I think there are a number of points. I do not think academics make good journalists. There is a problem with that.

Q437 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: Do students make good, cost-effective reporters for you?

Iain Overton: In terms of cost-effective, I pay more than the London minimum wage to people who have just left, so there is no exploitation, and that is even for work experience people. I certainly pay more than a local paper would. With regard to getting a collaboration with academics, I think it can work on occasion. I believe that Paul Lewis, for instance, who works for the *Guardian*, is currently doing a major exercise with the LSE, where they are looking at all the Twitter feeds that came out of the riots. This is being funded by a number of organisations, including the Open Society. The *Guardian* will run all the journalism and the LSE will run all the academic analysis of what they have found. Big-scale collaborations can be done but there probably needs to be, from the get-go, a decision that “We will handle the journalism and the mass appeal and the ‘let’s explain it clearly’ and let the academics write up their more hard-to-penetrate articles.” Generally speaking, academics do write in a way that is harder to penetrate. A generalisation—no offence to any academics.

Q438 Lord Bragg: If there is a postscript in this, Iain, what other funding possibilities do you foresee helping you? Are there any or have you exhausted them?

Iain Overton: A number of charities have come through the door to me and asked me to help with their investigations. I am quite happy to do that because I think there is a problem with charities doing investigations. I do not think they see the wood from the trees. Rightly so, the BBC and Channel 4 are wary of charities giving them a story. I have worked with

Oxfam, for instance, and there is an opportunity for us to get funding from them. Philanthropy is really the way that I am getting my funding. In the last three weeks, I have had four people emailing me asking me whether I would like to meet them to discuss them funding me, so I think I am showing that it can work. One other thing has happened. Two weeks ago, I submitted a tender to the European Union, who asked me to show how much investigative journalism had changed corruption in the European Union. That was a €60,000 tender, so there is quite a lot of money floating around the European Union.

Q439 The Chairman: We have to go and vote in a moment. Have you nearly finished?

Iain Overton: That is all the funding.

Q440 The Chairman: I think, probably, we have to do that. We have to try to tie things up when we get back, which will not take long, I hope. Sorry, I thought they were all going to be at the end of the debate.

The Committee was suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Q441 The Chairman: People have been peeling off so I think we might continue. We have run out of time so can everybody—both questioners and answerers—please be as concise as possible. I know that Lord Macdonald has a quick point he wants to make.

Q442 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: I was asking about the 25,000 media students and whether ventures like your own, Iain, can be replicated around the country, based on

universities. In the jargon of innovation, is what you are doing scalable or are you going to always be a one-off?

Iain Overton: There are certainly great possibilities. If there are ways of creating schemes where people who have just graduated can go into working for local papers or for the national media, that is certainly something that could be funded—entrepreneurial schemes. It is a huge resource, although there is an issue of quality. I have had a lot of media students through the door who probably have applied to do a media degree because it is quite attractive and they are not necessarily amazing investigative journalists. I would say that City and Cardiff produce credible graduates. It is interesting how the postgraduate has, in a way, replaced what used to be “go and spend time in the local papers”, and now a postgraduate is a precondition. In my time, I fell through the cracks between the two. There was not enough space out in the local papers to get a job and neither was there much demand for graduates, but having a postgraduate degree in journalism is pretty much now a precondition for getting a good job on a paper.

Q443 Baroness Deech: Listening to witnesses over the last few weeks, we have had a mixed response on the influence and benefit of digital technologies and social media: whether we are getting the truth and whether people can sift through the amount of information there is. I wonder to what extent digital technologies and the increased popularity of social media have changed investigative journalism and whether it is a good thing or a bad thing if there has been a change?

Dominic Cooper: Just to make a very brief point, yes it allows very easy access to some personal information on people if you are checking up on somebody, and there are various links to other individuals, perhaps. But in some social media—for instance, Facebook—journalists have to be aware that some of the stuff they see there may have been posted

quite frivolously by the person concerned and is not necessarily a reflection—or may not necessarily give a true reflection—of who they are as a person. That has to be used in a very cautious way. Some stories have slipped up on that in the past.

Martin Moore: I think there is a fundamental change, actually, and that change is really from a world of information scarcity to one of information abundance, and the challenge that that represents for journalism. There are three specific things which I think are changes from the investigative perspective. The first, which does not change, is the old skills: being able to sniff out stories, being able to look for inconsistencies—all the old-school skills of journalism—absolutely apply. There are two new ones that are now becoming critical. The second is what I call networked intelligence, which is like having a much bigger little black book of contacts and people you can call on, whether it is experts or sources. The social media are critical to that. If you have not seen it, I recommend watching Paul Lewis's TED talk, which is on the internet, where he describes how he investigated the stories of Ian Tomlinson and Jimmy Mubenga. He talks particularly about how he used social media.

The third one is about the intelligent use of computer power. This is where I think many journalists get very anxious, because they start to think that they have to become programmers, and so on. I do not think that is the case but I do think that, when you have 250,000 WikiLeaks documents or the COINS database, which cannot be downloaded to a normal computer—you have to get special hardware in order to download it—you have to think cleverly about how to use software and computer power to look for patterns, to look for inconsistencies, and to do the sorts of stuff that used to be done by people.

Iain Overton: I have a slide show that I give a presentation from, and it shows the first ever page of the *Daily Telegraph* on the riots, which is just a sea of words, and then it shows a recent international weekly *Telegraph* publication that had a picture of Will and Kate kissing

and then, underneath, it said “Bin Laden Dead”. That was pretty much it. I think it summed up a sea change that has occurred.

It is interesting that Lady Gaga has 9 million Twitter followers. I did a story recently, which was a very little story but it was part of our Open Society plan. I was watching Lady Gaga being interviewed by Paul O’Grady, and they were sponsored by Yorkshire.com. I was befuddled by this because I could not see any connection between Yorkshire, Lady Gaga and Paul O’Grady, so I called up Yorkshire.com and said, “How much was the sponsorship?” and they refused to tell me. I put in an FOI and they refused to tell me under commercial confidentiality, so I did a small story saying, “Sponsorship deals, public money is refused,” and my headline actually contained the words “Lady Gaga”. The number of hits I got on that story was phenomenal. It just goes through the roof because I had Lady Gaga in the title.

I think this boils down to the 30-second attention span. We have shifted from a front page of the *Daily Telegraph* which has the language of the courts in it, the language of bureaucracy and the language of power, to now a language of shortened sentences, a language where your average 12-year-old can understand it, which becomes the norm in telling. I think this has an impact in the shift on how you explain complicated matters to people who are becoming more and more attuned to the simplistic. I think this has a knock-on effect to commissioning.

For instance, the BBC places under its current affairs banner the claim that *Peckham Finishing School for Girls* is a current affairs programme. I have been told by a senior commissioning editor at the BBC that they do not do investigations. One of the problems is that, if it is very complicated, a lot of people shy off. A lot of the problems we have in the financial services sector is that the financial services sector employs very clever people to make things very complicated, where, actually, they are not that complicated. If you have a basic understanding of the laws of the market, you can understand a lot of what these people are

getting up to, but the trouble is they befuddle people. Then, if you have a room full of journalists and you ask them to hold up their hand if they have done a maths degree, around one or two would; the vast majority would come from the arts. I think this means that they have become terrified of doing proper investigations into financial issues. If the primary rule of investigative journalism is “follow the money”, you have the problem of two things: one is explaining to the general public about complicated matters and their ability or the editor’s desire to allow you to explain; and then also, I think, you have an issue of journalists themselves who may not be equipped with the skills to investigate the story in the first place.

The Chairman: There is a final question. Waiting patiently is the Bishop of Norwich.

Q444 The Bishop of Norwich: I am going to include Lady Gaga in all my sermons in the future to improve the online reception. Martin, you spoke of information abundance. When we saw Nick Davies, he talked about information chaos, and yet we also saw Claire Sandbrook, who talked about the way in which she could crunch data in her house, I think up in Cumbria, without leaving it and do investigative journalism in that way. Are there the talents and skills around for what is a very changed environment for investigative journalism? These seem to me very different skills from the investigative journalists of only the day before yesterday.

Martin Moore: That is critical. We are going through a period of transition and it is quite a difficult period of transition. As with any period of transition, lots of new skills are needed and required. Those are both human skills and also using computers in a different way and using digital technology in a different way. Part of the big problem now is how we get across that transition.

Just to note a couple of examples, I mentioned before local councils releasing all spending data over £500. I would love to be proved wrong: I have not seen any investigative analysis of that spending as yet. It is relatively early days; it has been only a few months. I downloaded my local council's spending data last night for July, which is the most recent one, five pages of about 90 lines per page, in a PDF, making it phenomenally difficult to do any analysis on, even if you were motivated to do it. The problem that we have at the moment is exactly as you say: many people do not have the skills and are from backgrounds that do not lend themselves necessarily to doing that sort of mathematical analysis or programming. There is investment happening, particularly at the national level. I know the *FT* has recently invested in hardware specifically to look at the COINS database and to do analysis on that; the *Guardian* has a whole area looking at data journalism; and the *Telegraph* has a data mapping reporter. When you drill down to the local level, as I say, when there are one and a half or two journalists on a newspaper, the idea that they are going to spend time digging through local spending data, even if they had the skills, is very difficult to see.

Iain Overton: One of the big challenges at the moment is that the technology is still quite nascent in many areas. It is incredibly seductive and you think, "Oh, the possibilities". Then you align it to the realities. The PDF example is a brilliant one. We did this major examination of European Union structural funds and, when I first started off, I was reassured by the programmer and the researchers, "This will take two weeks. All we do is do something called scraping the web and we create a little robot that will go away and get all the data and put it back into a perfectly readable format", and you're thinking, "This is brilliant. I will hire you to do this job". Six months later, the programmer kept on coming back saying, "There is a glitch in Romania", and I was like, "Please just do the job". It ends up costing a small fortune to hire a programmer for that length of time.

I am pretty sure it will contract, but there is an embarrassment of riches of information that is often presented badly and is often not presented comprehensively. Even in things like freedom of information requests, you send out an FOI and everyone responds to it in a different format and in a different way. In order for digital data journalism really to succeed, what is needed is a lobby by a number of people to ensure that Government publication is done in formatted style, which makes it easier for all of us to find the needle in the haystack.

Q445 The Chairman: We have run a considerable length of time over the time that was allocated for this, for which I both apologise and thank you. I also apologise to those who have been waiting to come in for the next stage. It has been very interesting. Thank you very much, each, for coming, and we are most grateful.

Examination of Witnesses

Paul Lashmar, Investigative Journalist and Lecturer in Journalism, Brunel University, and **Gavin MacFadyen**, Visiting Professor, City University and Director, Centre for Investigative Journalism.

Q446 The Chairman: Can I apologise for the delay? Thank you both for coming to speak to us. You were going to be joined by Hugo de Burgh, but he has not been very well so he has pulled out. There is just the two of you in the firing line for this session. I think you know what the inquiry is about and why we are doing it. We have had from each of you a short biography that has been circulated to our members so I do not see any point in going through that again. Unless either of you would like to make a brief introductory statement, what I suggest we do is go straight on with the questioning. It is up to each of you to respond as and how you wish in response to whatever comes to you. Perhaps I might start the ball rolling by saying can you give us some examples of what you consider to be good investigative reporting, whether it be at a local, national or international level?

Gavin MacFadyen: I made a brief list of the potential. It is a huge list, I am embarrassed to say. If one went back a few years, one of the more extraordinary pieces was *My Lai* by Seymour Hersh in the States, which probably did more than any other single thing to alert the public to some of the injustices of the war in Vietnam. Of course, he continued that process through Abu Ghraib and the disclosures around all the extraordinary rendition-related areas of the war. One of the more recent and extraordinary examples of British investigative reporting was indeed *Extraordinary Rendition*, which was done by a freelance *Sunday Times* journalist operating with his own money, with no institutional support from anyone, though he was able to sell the story to Radio 4 and the *Sunday Times*, and “Dispatches” and CBS later but initially, of course, nobody was interested in the story. It

was started by a very interesting Swedish journalist called Fredrik Laurin and eventually taken up by an extraordinary woman, a computer expert on the *New York Times*. They used CIA software to process enormous quantities of information, which had never been done before on a political inquiry of that kind and the result was to profoundly alter, I think, the public consciousness about the war in Iraq and the political and social consequences of the act of starting it. That was a singular and probably the most powerful story done out of Britain, which had huge ramifications across the world. So did the Iraq war logs that Iain was involved in and we were involved in as well; the stuff that had come from WikiLeaks, which had an enormous effect; David Leigh's extraordinary stuff on corruption in the BAE in the *Guardian*, which was, I think, a six-year investigation and had considerable power until of course the Prime Minister was able to close an investigation before it completed.

One of the more extraordinary stories, if you asked about these things from me, I would say, was the physical theft of \$38 billion from Baghdad Airport by persons unknown. This was your money and my money and everyone's money, and it vanished. There has not been a single person charged, let alone convicted, a few bits and bobs have been recovered, but the story was not felt to be worth a single column inch in Britain. It had to be published in the United States, even though major British resources were involved in it. Similarly, Nick Davies's book, an extraordinary book, *Flat Earth News*, did a great deal, I think, to disclose how our business works and the extraordinary problems in it. If we went back earlier to the Thalidomide investigation that was done by the *Sunday Times* insight team, that had a profound effect on all of us. It is slightly embarrassing, I have to say, being here when one of the people who trained me is sitting right opposite me. It is slightly unnerving.

Also, I would say the mass killings, the genocide, of Pol Pot was disclosed by a British journalist, or an Australian one in this case, John Pilger, and was an example for thousands and thousands of journalists around the world. Those are the sorts of stories that I think

left a huge impression on all of us and that I teach to journalists from all around the world. I should say briefly that the organisation that we started and in which the Bureau was incubated is called the Centre for Investigative Journalism, also at City University, funded by often the same people. We have trained about 1,000 investigative journalists. We are the largest training organisation in the world, outside of the United States, that trains only and exclusively in investigative areas.

I would also say something else in terms of the stories that are consequential, or we would argue were. The NGOs are now beginning to publish them in a large way. I think Iain touched on that and others did, but stories concerning extrajudicial killings, torture and illegal detention by Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and all the rest are often, recently, of stunning quality. Any journalist would be, I think, pleased by the substance, the serious diligence and the intelligence with which those things were constructed. The Global Witness recently did an extraordinary story on the theft of billions by African dictators, often into British banks; the “know your client” law does not seem to apply. Similarly, the theft of billions from state treasuries all around the world by tax-evading corporations reported by the Tax Justice Network here had huge repercussions on the Continent, in Africa and the United States. It is reported a bit here. The destruction of the Brazilian rainforests was documented with some brilliance by Greenpeace a year and one-half ago. That has had a huge effect on the political economy of Brazil. I will stop there but those were examples of things we thought were powerful.

Paul Lashmar: I think that is a very good list. I would only add one that you are already aware of, as you have interviewed Nick Davies, and that is obviously phone hacking. His work is outstanding. In general terms I would just like to say that I do keep an eye out for what local newspapers and radio stations are doing, and I think there is a good core of work still being done for the BBC regional TV outlets, radio outlets. There is also a desire to do it

in the more substantial regional newspapers. I see them from time to time. I post them on our student website to keep them informed. There is quite a lot going on.

Q447 The Bishop of Norwich: If Hugo de Burgh was here, we were going to quote some of his own words back to him about the techniques of investigative journalism being put to partisan commercial or corrupt uses, partly related to his view of government by spin, I think. Do you think there is any significant change in the quality or character of the investigative stories in the press, the media, television now compared with five, 10, 20 years ago? Has there been a change? Has there been a corrupting influence around in the use of techniques of investigative journalism in the sorts of ways that Hugo refers to?

Paul Lashmar: The diminution of the term: I have certainly found this. I have been contacted in the past by major news organisations on a Thursday asking me to write something so that they could utilise it as “an investigation by”, as though that is a substantive piece of investigative journalism. I found that increasingly difficult and they were trying to get it on the cheap essentially; they were not prepared to fund to the tune that you would expect a proper investigation to be done. At that one level, you do get that degradation of the term. I still think there is a good core of high-quality work going out, but some of it does become laughable. I do watch programmes where I do see it posed as investigative journalism, and it is almost to comic effect.

Gavin MacFadyen: It should be said that, for the last 20 years, investigative reporting, as I am sure everybody here knows, has been on major decline in Britain from what it was—major television programmes like “World in Action”, “This Week” and “Panorama”—to where we are now; we have nothing, really, that is comparable, or at least comparable with the depth and frequency that those programmes were. Similarly in heavyweight press, the *Sunday Times*’ Insight Team does not exist; it is three people, not 40. I could repeat this

throughout the media. I think one could be quite tough about it and say there has been a delinquency on an enormous scale in terms of the social responsibility of the press and in terms of protecting the public interest. What I was going to say about that is: what was significant about the earlier period from which we judge this current period was that there was a lot of in-house training. People were trained; I was trained at Granada. Other people trained at the BBC and the *Sunday Times* and the rest of it. There was serious training. When that dried up for reasons I think we all know, it was passed to universities to try to make up for this difference. Before that, there was no journalism in universities, virtually nothing, as you know. Now they are scrambling to make up for it and there are about three universities that do reasonably serious courses. We ourselves train people to do all the things that the universities do not teach. We are full-time, with a full-time staff doing that, because universities simply do not have the resources to do it. Do we have the capacity? Yes. Do we have the energy and money? No. Does society grant the importance of these things? No, otherwise there would be the money available.

Q448 The Bishop of Norwich: We have had some witnesses here who dislike the term “investigative journalism” and say all journalism is investigative but from what you are saying, Paul, you would not agree with that.

Paul Lashmar: It is a term that has a reality about it. I have often heard editors say, “Oh, I do not believe in investigative journalism, all journalists should be investigative,” but they are the very editors who do not fund their staff to do that kind of work. In a way, at one level, investigative journalism is a resource issue. It is saying, “We have someone here who actually does like banging their head against the wall so we will let them do it, and we will fund them. We will give them proper resources and we will take them off the diary.” It is a

resource issue at one level and it uses people who are predisposed to this kind of journalism and for some reason rather enjoy it.

I completely agree with that in a general sense, but there are lots of journalists sitting there rewriting Press Association copy day in and day out and probably they would like to be more engaged with a more investigative kind, but they are subject to very powerful financial pressures.

Q449 Baroness Deech: Investigative journalism can only flourish in a relatively open, democratic society, can it not? You may say it is declining here but at least it is happening. Presumably it does not happen—or it was not happening in the past—in, let us say, those regimes in the Middle East that have just gone up in flames or in other closed societies. It is always going to be in the democratic West, pretty much, is it not?

Paul Lashmar: I think it has really spread out and there is a real hunger for it. I do not want to be apocalyptic but I would say, if we do not have investigative journalism, we will not have a free society for much longer because it is absolutely crucial. It is as simple as that to me after all these years.

Q450 The Chairman: The question I want to ask is, given your experience in this area over a period, do you think those who control the direction of the media, whether they are senior television executives, or owners, boards or editors of newspapers, think investigative journalism is less important than it was? Perhaps 40 years ago, did people think it was part of their civic responsibility in a role like that to see this kind of activity was carried out? Has there been a cultural change in the organisation? Is the media more interested in entertainment than it was?

Gavin MacFadyen: I think that is certainly true. Certainly, for example, Iain and I have had experience at ITV where people have said to us, “News is not news, it is infotainment.” These are the people directly in charge of the news you are supposed to be getting. Obviously, if there is an entertaining item it is going to be rather more prominently displayed than something that is more searching or difficult, or something that might be quite controversial. To avoid controversy and the expense of the law in courts, people opt for the simple solution. That is what we have got, I think. It has not reached the level of the United States, it would be fair to say, where you could watch television for years and see nothing. I think here you have a big problem of the decline, and it has been gradual so I do not think it is precipitous. We do not have the sense that we have gone over the edge, but it has been in substantial decline, not just in investigative reporting but in serious drama and children’s programmes and everything else. It is not unique to us, but the decisions taken have very little to do with investigative journalism and a great deal to do with commercial and political priority, it would appear.

Q451 The Chairman: Do you think the same, or not?

Paul Lashmar: I do. It is very arbitrary but I have been to commissioning editors of what are supposed to be serious investigative programmes in the last decade with projects that I know in the past would have been commissioned—interesting, exciting projects—to find them looking embarrassed and saying they were not really interested; they were scrabbling for an excuse not to run it because it was quite a serious piece of work, and there was not a celebrity or something that would give it an infotainment element. I found that very, very frustrating because these days you have to do a lot of work to get to a commissioning editor. To then be rebuffed is quite a difficult process.

Gavin MacFadyen: There is something else too in that, in the 20-year hiatus that we have had in investigative reporting, a class of educated boss figures, if you will—executive producers, executive editors—have not gone through the process of fighting serious contenders in the courts, of taking risks and understanding what good journalism really is. These people are quite good in many ways but simply have not been through the hothouse of the 60s and 70s in this country, or in other countries more recently, where there was combative journalism, an alternative press feel about what they did. When they are confronted with these problems, in that sense, they do not have the experience to fight, so the easiest answer is always no. I think that is familiar to most people in the business. You have executives in charge of commissioning and supervision of programmes who simply lack, often, the courage that experience gives them.

Q452 Baroness Fookes: What do you do about training them, so to speak, or the next generation?

Gavin MacFadyen: We are hoping that the people we train may eventually become such people, but the answer is no, we do not have any programme. I wish that we did.

Q453 The Chairman: Just to put the point on the record, you are not saying this—that there has been a kind of dumbing-down; the sort of thing you would expect to hear from the House of Lords—because we are all of us getting older?

Gavin MacFadyen: I am afraid I subscribe to that view, though.

The Chairman: I am just trying to make it absolutely clear, though, that you think objectively—you are absolutely satisfied—there has been this change?

Gavin MacFadyen: Without a question, yes. Without any doubt whatsoever.

Q454 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: I would like to take both of you back to a comment from Mr MacFadyen earlier where you said you thought some of the delinquency of the press, in particular, was partially offset at least by very constructive activity by some NGOs. Does that in a way imply that you do not have to be trained as a journalist to be an investigative journalist?

Gavin MacFadyen: That is a good question. Paul has made a specialty of this area, so I defer to his view.

Paul Lashmar: When I was first in journalism, there were really quite solid barriers. If you were an investigative journalist, you did not do anything else. Actually, if you went out to PR, you could not come back. A lot of that has gone, and what you will now find is that, in the NGOs, a lot of very good investigative journalists have taken refuge in the NGOs because they have the money and the patience to do these things well. You will find people like Sue Bishop at ActionAid and Andrew Hogg at Christian Aid—there are a whole bunch of such people—who are both ex-major investigative journalists. There are seven or eight that I can think of immediately who are now working for NGOs and doing really good work, particularly on tax havens but all sorts of things. They are using their expertise and bring professionalism and they now work with the media and are much more proactive. When they do a piece, if they do a video project, it is nearly broadcast-able at the point that they hand it over to whichever media outlet they are working with.

Q455 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: To some extent the same could apply, but there is no way of verifying it to some blogs that are put out by individual citizens. Are we looking for some sort of kite mark so that we learn to rely on some rather than others? I think we got a figure from Google last week that 48 hours are uploaded onto YouTube every minute.

Gavin MacFadyen: NGOs usually have boards and people looking at the stuff that is coming out. Some of them are journalists as well, so there is a filtering process—granted it is nothing like as serious as a newspaper—but they can be very intelligent and capable.

Q456 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: If we take it less formally than the NGO into individual blogs, is there any process by which we can in any way categorise them or kite-mark them so some are regarded as more reliable than others?

Paul Lashmar: I do not think there is, but eventually someone who is doing that kind of work will build up a bit of a reputation and probably then be brought in to one of the media organisations as a guest blogger, or their work will be recognised as having some sort of depth to it, so they will be brought in house in some form.

Q457 The Chairman: Some NGOs have axes to grind. How can you as the consumer know, as it were, the degree of conventional impartiality and forensic focus that is being put onto the subject matter that is coming out under the imprint?

Paul Lashmar: If an NGO puts it out on their own website you have to go with their reputation. Their reputation hangs on that for better or worse, so you make your decision on the basis of that. For instance, I think of the Environmental Investigation Agency that has been doing undercover work for something like 25 years. They have been filming undercover for more than 25 years. They have a good reputation. Undoubtedly, they have an agenda but they work closely with the BBC quite frequently and other organisations. It is the job of the BBC to take that material and test it to their standard and make sure that it is legitimate. If there is an issue they have to go back out and check it. You have to subject

this material to the quality journalism test. I am really pleased that these people are working in a time when the traditional media do not have the resources to do it. If I am gloomy about aspects of the traditional media, despite my increasing age, I can say I am very optimistic about the ways things are popping up elsewhere. It is quite cheering to see what the NGOs and charities are doing.

One of the things that we are trying to do at Brunel is: we have a course where we recognise this is going on. Instead of saying, “Well should we, should we not?”, we are saying these are people who want to do something, they want journalism skills, we will raise the ethical issues and discuss it and put it in context, but let us help them. Let us give the young people who want those skills, and want to work in the campaigning sector, whether it is in the traditional media or NGOs, the skills, but talk about the ethical issues and how you deal with this. Let us deal with the reality, where things are happening positively.

Q458 Lord Bragg: You have possibly answered this in what you have been saying. What do you think are the main threats and opportunities to investigative journalism over the next five or 10 years? What chances does it have, really?

Gavin MacFadyen: From Universities?

Q459 Lord Bragg: Well, no, just around the place: from the funding; what you said about newspapers, what you said about television, has all been pretty pessimistic. Do you see opportunities opening up as these things, as it were, are slowly closing down? Do you see new ways of approaching them that will tempt them to open up their teams again—Gus’s team and things like that?

Gavin MacFadyen: I think you can make a general point that no investigative reporting that we know about has come about except through the largesse of a big corporation. In Granada’s case, you have the big crude case that “World in Action” was supported in a

sense by “Coronation Street” as a money-making item, and perhaps the dry cleaning shops; whatever it was, that allowed that to go on. In America there is the same thing. There are now universities in the States which have become homes to serious investigative work. For example, at Berkley in California, Lowell Bergman has put together an extraordinary mini-coalition between the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, PBS “Frontline” and his own university. They collaborate on stories. The students get to work with the best people they can find. The networks get free people, in effect, but everybody wins out of that situation. The university can then claim that the wonderful stories that emerged from this are a product of their environment, which is what happens. It has also been replicated now at the American University in Washington by a very talented guy called Chuck Lewis, who knows more about the fundraising possibilities of investigative work than anybody we know here.

We have set up the Bureau and other organisations. Recently we set up a similar organisation in Brazil called A Pública, based on ProPublica in New York, which is turning into an extraordinary success with almost no money so far; it has had big fights, death threats, so we know they are doing the right thing. That is going on very well. Those models are rich and alive. The question is: how do we make the internet accessible to those demands? That is a real problem.

Paul Lashmar: It is a very optimistic side there are still young people who are bloody-minded enough to want to be investigative journalists. There are problems about where you get the platform, but people are being terribly innovative. I was involved with Gavin on the setting up of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and lots of people just did not think it was going to work. They did not think it would last more than five or six months. But it is still there, and it is doing stuff. People are being very innovative about finding ways to get this stuff out. At one level, while I despair of the traditional media in lots of ways, I see good things happen as well. I am most encouraged by the fact that I am seeing more young people

than for a long while come through who really do understand what that is about—often from outside the UK. They really grasp the importance of what investigative journalism can do and why it is important. That does keep one going in one's darker moments.

Q460 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: As far as the skills in the universities are concerned, I think Gavin MacFadyen was saying three universities out of nearly 200 are involved in this. There are said to be 25,000 media students. It is remarkable that City University could train 1,000 investigative journalists. Is there a need for an internal battle in the universities to say, "Here is the way journalism is going, it should be taught in a different way with computer-aided data mining and all the rest of it"? You talked about the international appeal. Since we have a pretty mature tradition here as the Americans have, can that be exported? I know you have attempted to export it to eastern Europe, and a lot of people have been killed practising it in Russia. It is happening in China. We hear it is happening in Brazil. Does it turn into almost a social movement at some time, based on the universities and training, to get away from the old structures that are pretty decayed and uninterested in many aspects of this?

Gavin MacFadyen: For example, there is a large group of international investigators who meet every two years. We just finished a meeting in Kiev; there were 600 journalists from around the world at this. Only about one-quarter of them are university-based. The rest are mostly funded by things like OSI, by George Soros. They are funding a huge amount of this. We are funded partially by them, so is the Bureau to some extent, although I think we get more from them than they do. Whatever it is, they are a very active payer, they support journalism organisations and journalists in about 30 countries. It has been very effective. The biggest player in this area is the Knight Foundation in America. For some reason they seem to have a huge monopoly on this; they train 200 newspaper people every week. It is a

huge operation. They control most of the press, in a sense, in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico. They are huge but they are also very close to the State Department. It is a slightly muddy area there, a slightly worrying area. There is a lot of foundation money increasingly available, which is what has made most of us enthusiastic.

Q461 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: That is very much an American phenomenon. One would think that rich people enjoy buying influence, and you would think they would put their money as readily into journalism perhaps as they would new academy schools or whatever, but there does not seem to be very much sign of it in the UK at all.

Gavin MacFadyen: The reason, I think, is that they do not get as much of a tax break. It is as simple as that. In America you get a substantial, huge tax break if you give a lot of money, not here.

Q462 The Chairman: But philanthropy generally: this country is thought to be a bit tight with the purse strings.

Gavin MacFadyen: Yes, that is right. We get numbers of small donors from all over the United States, and Mexico even, but we get almost none here

Paul Lashmar: If I could come at your question completely from the other side, there are a small number of universities that do produce absolute, trained investigative journalists, City being the obvious prime one. There are modules and units in quite a lot of the courses around the country that encourage students to understand what investigative journalism is about; and that is a very good thing. At Brunel we are a relatively new, quite small journalism department. We have about 100 students at the moment, undergraduate and postgraduate. We are very much centred around the National Council for the Training of

Journalists' agenda, so we are really very keen on basic skills that editors recognise. That is where our core is.

We also do digital journalism and other things. We are really interested in producing people to a kite standard of skills but, because I am given to it, I say to students, "I am going to do a little forum. If you want, come along and talk to me about investigative journalism." Last week I had four students turn up and two others apologise. So out of 100 I get six, but that is good. What percentage of journalists at any one time have actually wanted to be in investigative journalism? Interestingly, they were of quite diverse nationalities and all women, I have to say, which is another interesting breakthrough, because when I started investigative journalism was a fairly testosterone, male activity. Things have changed and they are really quite clued up about it. When I looked at the four that turned up, and I looked at their notes about who they were, they all said, "I would like to be an investigative journalist." Now, we are not training investigative journalists per se, but they are interested and that is really quite a nice thing.

Q463 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: With that potential resource of the universities, is there a way you could map it more purposefully across the country? For instance, Strathclyde does wrongful imprisonment with its students. Is there a way that, inside the universities, you and colleagues can start putting together something more coherent and not just churning out students, 50% of whom will end up in public relations?

Paul Lashmar: Certainly, given we are not trying to produce investigative journalists, we are talking about looking at Project Censored from the States, which gets students involved in looking at cases and investigating them as we build up. With the MA in Campaigning and Journalism we are trying to look at working with NGOs on projects as well. We are consciously trying to up the standards and get students engaged in that kind of journalism.

We are interested in best practice. We certainly do not spend our time meeting the lowest criteria of the industry and saying, “All you are going to do is sit in front of a screen and just top and tail Press Association copy.” We are trying to encourage them to come through with a much more proactive approach to journalism. I think it does. I have been a university lecturer, mostly part-time, for 10 years and I have seen some of them doing good work; they get awards. You feel that you set some seeds there that actually are beneficial; they are growing into really very good journalists. There is a lot to be said for it.

Gavin MacFadyen: There is, and maybe I can add something to that. Strathclyde, in point of fact, has started an extraordinary programme based on something from Chicago called the Innocence Project that started at Northwestern University. It was probably the single most influential journalism project we know about.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Gavin MacFadyen: It was a unique idea: to pair one journalism student with one law student, form 20 such little groups and send them into the prison system to Death Row. Each group was assigned one person on Death Row. There were 43 people as I remember, I may not have the number exactly right, on Death Row. They were able, in seven months’ time, to free 13 people because of manufactured evidence, false testimony, all the rest of it, which had landed these people in prison in that way. The *Sun-Times* and other Chicago newspapers jumped in, being humiliated by a small group of teenagers who had done the job they should have done, and I think they were able to free another 10 or 12. It had a huge effect. Then 11 universities here in this country took it up, which was a great idea, including

City, but I regret to report that very little seemed to have happened. There seemed to be a very dry period and not much has occurred. But it means that it is possible and people know that kind of thing is possible, which is very encouraging.

Q464 Baroness Fookes: Before I get to my own question, I am much intrigued by this proposal that you are putting forward effectively for here based on the Chicago experiment. Is there no possibility of bringing this forward, not for Death Row, since we do not have one, but there must be other similar useful things that a pairing of a law student and a journalism student might usefully do?

Gavin MacFadyen: I think there are and I think there are a lot of people who are looking at it now. Sadly, I am not one of them in that detail; I write about it and read about it. I think that we will know something about it very soon. Indeed, the idea is very attractive.

Q465 Baroness Fookes: It seems to be something we would like to look at more closely.

Gavin MacFadyen: I think in the next few months there will be more to report.

Q466 Baroness Fookes: Right. Could we turn now to a few figures on numbers of students? Mr Lashmar, I think you mentioned you had about 100 going through per year? Is it a three-year course?

Paul Lashmar: We have three courses at the moment. One MA Journalism and one in MA International Journalism; those numbers are relatively small—15 or 20 for the MA Journalism and 10 for the MA International Journalism. We are capped because Brunel is a research university; it is not really a bums on seats type of university, so we are set quite reasonable amounts. We are looking at 30 BA entrants, undergraduates, a year. We are under quite a lot of demand. In fact, this year we have 34 because you cannot quite control the UCAS

system. We have 34 undergraduates joining us per year and they are on a three-year course.

Q467 Baroness Fookes: Does that come up to roughly the 100 you mentioned? Did I misunderstand that figure?

Paul Lashmar: No, at the moment we have 30, 30 and about 15—so they are undergraduates—plus 18 and 8, I think at the moment, so that is around 100,. We hope for more but not dramatically so. When we bring in the MA in Campaigning and Journalism we are hoping for, initially, probably 10 people.

Q468 Baroness Fookes: Are you finding that there are many more people wanting to come on your courses than is possible?

Paul Lashmar: For UCAS, certainly, we have quite a high points score in journalism terms of 320 points, and we now require B–B–B. We could easily have taken 60, I would think, reasonably good-quality people who meet those criteria. There is certainly a demand at the undergraduate level. For the MA, we seem to be okay, but I am told by other colleagues that the MA numbers are dropping off at the moment. Of course, we have no idea what will happen in September 2012. I may be sitting here saying I have 10 students, I do not know.

Q469 Baroness Fookes: Mr MacFadyen, what about your institution?

Gavin MacFadyen: We are separate from City. They very kindly house us and it is a warm place for us to reside, but we are quite separate from the finances and organisation of the university. They do about the same numbers as Paul's group. There are about 30 or 40 people a year who come through an investigative specialism system. There is a significant number who apply and simply cannot afford it, so drop out. We end up, if they come to us,

trying to train them, even if the university will not. It is sometimes very difficult with our own resources because we are a charity. But it seems sad, if someone is very keen to go and right wrongs and do things, that we should not help them. We try to do a bit of that. The 1,000 people that I mentioned before were really ones who came through us, through CIJ, not through City. I think City has probably only put through a couple of hundred, probably since this programme became serious.

Q470 Baroness Fookes: Could we go back a little on this question of the commissioning editors and other worthies at the top who are, I think in your view, failing to provide a proper canvas of investigative journalism? Is there any way of training such people? Where do they come from?

Gavin MacFadyen: They have come out of 20 years of a very conservative sense of commercial television on the whole, which includes the BBC, although there are some very competent people around. The battle-scarred veterans of investigative reporting are not many to be seen, I am afraid. You have people who may have good degrees and all of that but do not, sadly, have that combat experience. It is a combat experience; you are up against people with seriously deep pockets, threatening lawyers and all the rest of it and you have to be careful what you do. The simple answer, instead of spending time to research it properly and get it legalised properly, test every assumption and every fact, is to say simply, "No, too expensive".

Q471 Baroness Fookes: Is there any way out of this, because that is very depressing?

Gavin MacFadyen: I am sorry; I wish I could say something more optimistic.

Paul Lashmar: Might I say something more depressing? There are several people I can think of who actually came out of the same schools, who have been in TV and have done

investigations and have turned gamekeeper basically. They spout the infotainment language because that is survival these days, and they do not fight for it as hard as you would hope. That can be quite depressing to deal with, to hear people you perhaps knew 20 years ago as quite aggressive investigative journalists tell you why you cannot do investigative journalism anymore.

Q472 Baroness Fookes: They sold the pass, in effect.

Gavin MacFadyen: One of the anomalies is that where we teach at the university, three doors down from our classroom is a much more heavily packed classroom with much better-dressed students learning public relations, corporate communication and spin, and they are doing extremely well, thank you very much. The university loves the fees they acquire from them. We are much pushed away, in a sense, and you can understand that. They say, “That is what the industry wants, therefore why should we train other people?” In answer to your question, the more serious answer is I suppose that the examples like the Bureau here, ProPublica in New York and things like that, are quite infectious. I think courage is infectious. We are in a situation where, if they see that the Bureau publishes a tough story, and they get through the law without being wounded, then that gives courage to these people and we hope that there will be more and more of that.

Q473 Baroness Fookes: Perhaps that is where the Chicago experiment would be useful, if the young lawyers could teach the young journalists how to get around these things?

Gavin MacFadyen: True, and vice versa.

Q474 Lord St John of Bletso: We have heard about what the ideal skill sets are for an effective investigative journalist—data analysis, good interpersonal skills, stubborn/persistent

character, and, I think in your words, Paul, being results-driven—but what are the specific qualities, skills and attributes that a student needs to become an investigative journalist?

Paul Lashmar: They have to have a very good grasp of the law. They need functional journalism skills; they do not have to be great writers. Persistence is a key part of it. The determination to carry through where others do not is quite a clearly definable element of the investigative journalist. People do self-select by wishing to do that kind of work and being interested in it. It can be very painful. It is quite a stressful activity. There are easier ways if you want to make a lot of money in journalism—become a columnist, do not be an investigative reporter. It is not a big-money path. It is not paid commensurate with the stress levels that are attained through it. You cannot underestimate that kind of bloody-mindedness of that person who cares about things and gets angry and feels things about injustice. I do not want to sound too weepy-eyed about it, but that is what brings through people who want to do it; that is what motivates them. They self-select to some degree; you can spot them and you can work with them.

Gavin MacFadyen: It was defined as scepticism plus paranoia. If you had these ingredients, you might be successful in it. I think what Paul said is absolutely right; certainly for us, the kinds of people who come to us and are seen really exuding energy to do all of this are exactly those kinds of people.

Q475 Lord St John of Bletso: Presumably, also, they need to be trained for a converged world. We are talking increasingly about the tools of new technology and social media.

Paul Lashmar: They do, and some of the methods that I used 20 or 30 years ago would now be frowned upon, I suspect. We sailed very close to the wind, on occasion, in the past. I always thought we tried to stay on the right side, but it would be very hard to do some of those things these days. But what investigative journalists have been doing is reconfiguring

with data journalism. At Brunel although we are not teaching investigative journalism, we do talk about how to use data sets, how to look for that material, how to analyse material. What the Americans call precision journalism is really becoming a very important element of what is going on. We teach it; I know for certain that City does that. The investigative journalism course is very big on that.

Q476 Baroness Deech: How much prominence do your courses give to digital technology and social media, and do you feel it is about right?

Gavin MacFadyen: 70% of the high-level instruction that we give is in that area. We are assuming that people who come to us are mostly working journalists or advanced graduate students who have basic skills already. We hope they do. For example, internet research is the most widely used tool of every reporter in this country, yet most universities do not even have a single course on its use, which is extraordinary when you think about it. So we employ former policemen, people who know about these things, who are very helpful to journalists. We do some things that are, as Paul says, close to the wind—things that are digital in a remote way. We teach covert recording. How do you record things against very dangerous people in a safe way? What are the legal and ethical implications of that? We do a bit of that.

More importantly still, we teach forensic business accounting because, as everybody knows, 70% of crime in this country is business related one way or another. Yet, most reporters do not have a clue about how to read a P&L sheet; it is a complete void. We have to take people by the hand to Companies House and show them what they have to do to do that. One of the shocking things is that we teach the BBC these methods. We took a whole room full of financial reporters, many of whom are familiar to you. We asked: how many of you have been to Companies House? Only one hand went up out of 20. Similarly, how

many people have used EDGAR, the American stock exchange system? Again, total silence in the room. That is when we realised we had to push very hard with this. Now it is an integrated part of what we do; we bring a forensic accountant in to train with a very good reporter that some of you may know from *Private Eye*. The two of them together are a pretty formidable combination to teach. That is the sort of stuff that we do, and that is partly digital, but it is mostly just basic reporting in that way.

Q477 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: If you take the hierarchy of what investigative journalists are interested in, they tend toward the drama of war, crime and corporate corruption and so on, whereas probably what this country needs is groups of students who are carefully analysing what is going on in hospitals and in care homes, what is happening to children in care. It is much more down-to-earth stuff that perhaps the new technologies will make it possible to unbundle in order to see what is really going on inside. Local councils are a good example. How can you somehow work to make sure that is done in the future? It would be very sad if it was not done.

Gavin MacFadyen: That is part of basic training in the university too, is it not? Kids come to us, and we give them tasks or they assign themselves tasks of exactly that kind. Some of them become care workers for example. At LCC in London, two of the students did brilliant work by becoming cleaners; they went in as semi-illiterate cleaners to document abuse of the elderly in these places. It was first-class work done entirely by the students. We try to build a platform from their experience out.

Q478 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: That is I think called observer participation; it used to be called that anyway. You encourage people to go in to institutions, as was done in

the care home recently, get jobs and come out with stories. The ethics of that is just public interest?

Gavin MacFadyen: Absolutely; totally the public interest. But more importantly in that area is that what they do not find themselves, they have to acquire through the people there—whistle-blowers. As we know, a huge part of what we do is encouraging, protecting and running whistle-blowers in a sense. We have a huge duty of care there, and it is a very powerful and important part of what we do. In fact, one of our things now is to build a commission of whistle-blowers in Britain so they are protected. We get the credit for what they do and their lives are often destroyed. They lose their homes, their families, their houses. They are subject to terrible community pressures, often sometimes threats by the police and on their lives. They have no recourse, except through us in a sense. It is very important for us to build a community of care for these people; it should not be just us, it should be all of you as well. It is really important.

Q479 Baroness Fookes: Interpreters have had to come over here.

Gavin MacFadyen: That is right, absolutely.

Q480 The Earl of Selborne: I was going to ask for your views on the quality of the professional training courses for investigative journalism. You referred to the fact that you must have a good legal grounding. Do you think the courses in this country overall, not just in your own establishments, are relevant and up to the required quality? What could be done, if anything, to strengthen them?

Paul Lashmar: To be honest, there is only one real professional training course; well, there are only three really. One is the one Gavin is involved in. There is Strathclyde. There is one other—Sheffield, if I remember. That is a very small part of it. Because we are only

dealing with occasional journalists—as I said, four out of 100—who are genuinely interested, we will take them almost personally and ground them in the basics of journalism so they can build upon that, and to develop them in a climate where they have lecturers who have an affinity with investigative journalism and can talk about how they might progress. To be quite blunt, if you are taking a group of students and you want to train them to NCTJ level as part of their MA course, it does take a year anyway. You do not have a lot of time to do all of the other stuff. If you want them to be able to turn around good copy that will go into media organisations, you want them grounded in the basics of law, understanding how the Houses of Parliament work—which is what we do—what the MP does, what the local council does and also to have some broader theoretical and academic understanding of the context of journalism. By the time you do that, it does not give you a lot of room to actually put them undercover for three months. Then, you would start to identify and suggest to those students that there are ways for them.

For instance, I have one student from Singapore who has done a very good piece of work on homelessness. I think it has shown she can do investigative journalism. I will now talk to Iain and say, “Look, I have this student, will you see if she can be nurtured a bit?” So you get training in taking them through the basics. She knows about the ideas of libel defamation, but she can go with some understanding into a professional outlet where she will be nurtured.

Gavin MacFadyen: One other question you raised about the law is not dealt with much, which is privacy. We are used to all the complications of libel, defamation and slander but not privacy. The French law, of course, which has influenced the situation here quite markedly, is not studied as far as I know at any university here. It ought to be.

Q481 The Chairman: This country is in such a state of flux anyway.

Gavin MacFadyen: It is, but it is so frequently used now against us as journalists that we need to have some background in it. We get lawyers to come in and talk to us, but even they are in a state of difficulty with it. We need some training here because people do not know what they are going up against.

Q482 The Earl of Selborne: You mentioned the facilities the university provides for the PR course down the passage. Suppose the university took you more seriously and you were given more resources. What would you use them for?

Gavin MacFadyen: There are a lot of specific skills. For example, all of us do pharmacological investigations in one form or another, but a lot of us lack the science background to make sense of that. The normal method we use is to bring in a scientist, bring in some experts. But now we are in a world where the conflicting testimony of those experts causes confusion in its own right. We need ways of separating out competent people from incompetent people. When we do courses for that, they are packed with people, because it is perceived by everybody to be an enormous area of difficulty. We take very specific areas—for example, environmental science—and we test those with journalists to see how well they can stand up to the fight. How can they deal with corporate-sponsored sceptics, for example, who are very sophisticated: scientists on huge salaries to find ways of diminishing climate change arguments and things. They are very effective at it. There are a lot of areas of that kind.

We teach, for example, something that we were taught. If you are investigating a crime or something awful, you must know the law about what it is you are investigating. So frequently, reporters do not. We get calls from them all the time asking did I happen to know the law in regard to house purchasing in Wales? It has to do with some crime that was committed, but they had not bothered to go to the law themselves there. One of the

problems there, parenthetically, is that unlike the United States, Germany, or Canada, British lawyers on the whole are not pro bono sensitive. They do not tend to be sympathetic with large-scale, complicated litigations.

Q483 The Chairman: I am a lawyer myself and I was brought up on the principle that free advice was worth what you paid for it.

Gavin MacFadyen: There you are. I say no more.

Q484 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: One of the paradoxes here is we seem to be at the point of training more investigative journalists than ever before at a time when there are far fewer opportunities than there were in the past. What do you say to students? We have heard that half of them are going into public relations from the media courses. Do you really say to them, “This is a very tough game, it is very underpaid, your life may well be at risk, join up as an investigative journalist”?

Paul Lashmar: The number that is being trained is actually quite small; you are talking about no more than 40 a year, I would have thought, across the board who are trained as investigative journalists. What you are seeing is another level of people who are doing modules on it, so they are aware of it, and then you are getting the others who are doing journalism courses who are taught about investigative journalism. You do not expect them all to immediately queue up to become investigative journalists, and most do not, but they will go into news desks understanding that ethos. They will hopefully have that enthusiasm, they will work and, rather than the generation that have made the last 20 years rather moribund, they will have a much more practical and aggressive approach and see the value of investigative journalism.

Q485 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: If we look to what they might aspire to do after university, the way the world is changing and the new technologies are kicking in, is it not more likely that you are actually training potential campaigners? They will not get a job on a news desk easily, any longer, but they could get a job for an NGO. You are giving them the kind of skills to pursue their campaigns. With social media developing, you can bring great groups of people together for short-term campaigns and achievements that will melt into something else in the future. Is that not what should be offered to students rather than the thought of the job in the *Sunday Times*?

Paul Lashmar: Exactly. Gavin has been very supportive and said this is clearly an issue that has been arising with him. At Brunel we are bringing this course into play in September 2012 that will exactly recognise the phenomenon that you speak about. This is exactly where the opportunities are going to arise so let us train them so they do recognise the skills they need but also the ethical issues they are going to confront and the techniques. Exactly; that is our USP for next year; that is what we are going to do.

Gavin MacFadyen: Curiously, I think, journalists who get this training are not necessarily going to find a job as we know but they can get a job as a very nasty travel writer, or something else, looking at crimes in unlikely places because that can still sell. For example, we now train some people who work for the BMJ. They are looking at doing some very good work indeed. One feels inappropriate to raise it, but we train a large number of foreign students. In our case it must be 30%; I do not know what it is for Paul, but it must be something like that, a large number. Often they are very good indeed because they pay a lot of money to come here to train. They take it very seriously. The best films that we have ever made have been by Danes and Russians and Japanese even. They bring those skills to their country and then that creates more students coming here. It flows back and forth but I

do not think there are enough jobs, as you say, to justify the numbers we are training but then again there is a knock-on effect that raises the standard across the business.

Q486 The Chairman: I think this is very important: the underlying ethics and approach of the journalists. Traditionally, it seemed to me that part of the role of the newspaper and the editor was to mediate so that there was, if all was being done as it should have been done, an ethical basis for what came out in the newspaper under the name of the journalist and so on. Do you think that if we move into a world where many of the kind of people you are training are not going to be working for traditional publishers but are working for others, as I mentioned earlier, people who have an axe to grind, do you think that the sort of fundamental ethical standards that you are instilling will actually remain with these people? You also mentioned scientists who took large sums of money to come up with a view of the world that may not necessarily have been supported by the scientific evidence. Do you think that kind of corruption will occur or do you think you will be alright in keeping these people straight and ethical by your light?

Gavin MacFadyen: It is a good question in the sense that we do not have an easy answer to the collapse of the traditional superstructure that we work in. Conventional television simply does not sustain investigative reporting of the kind we like to think we can do. Radio still does. Radio 4 is still excellent in this country; it is of a very high standard. In fact, it is probably the best radio of its kind in the world. I am a very critical person but I turn that on loyally because there is so much good investigative material on it. The reason for that is it costs 20 cents. It is just a tape recorder and a razor blade, in effect, and you are going to make a radio programme. It is not the £400,000 thing you have to do for television. That alone explains some of that. That is the bottom line of it I think. It is the money in large measure.

Paul Lashmar: On the ethical stance, I have just earlier said I have seen colleagues who have been sucked into TV suddenly spout things to me that I found unacceptable. I cannot look into men's souls or those of the people that we train. You hope you can do the best you can with them. I can see there is a place for PR, and I think there is something like 40 PRs for every journalist in this country at the moment I read recently. It is economical, there is a place. That is reasonable. I do not personally encourage people to become PRs because that is not what pushes my buttons. I can see that if you believe that investigative journalism is vital for democracy and it seems to have a value, you try to convey that to your students. If they understand that, you hope it stays with them and you hope you convey those things and the tradition. I am out of the tradition that goes back to the muckrakers, the Cobbetts and others and you convey that too. This is not me, it is part of a long tradition of people who have stood up and said something needed to be done about this, and who have tried to bring an independent scrutiny of the other estates. It is all that. You hope that they catch that, and they get that, as I did when I was a student; I got it and it stayed with me. You hope that that will remain.

Q487 Baroness Fookes: Do you hope that despite the odds that that great tradition will remain?

Gavin MacFadyen: I think it will in different forms.

Q488 Baroness Fookes: Different forms maybe but—

Gavin MacFadyen: Yes, I think the impetus remains. People who are sensitive to issues of justice, malfeasance, corruption, are going to be that way no matter what the formal outlet is. People are going to be angered about those things and want to do something about it. Of course, my heart beats much faster when I see such a person because we know good things may hopefully happen from it. I have just a quick comment, if I may, on what you have

asked. We have lived in a complex media environment where there were all sorts of standards at work defining what you see and, often more importantly, defining what you do not see. I think as the ownership changes, and the means of elaboration change, that is going to change too. After all, if Murdoch leaves the press business, that will be a place where more voices will begin to be heard rather than fewer, because the one thing about Murdoch and the media was its ability to constrain voices as much as to sustain them. We live, in a way, where there is a kind of self-censorship by omission. For example, if you compare a major event in Britain with how it is reported in Germany or the *New York Times*, or a Japanese newspaper, you are sometimes stunned by what you read; it is so much different from what we get here and sometimes even more informative. I think that is what is also going to change and that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Q489 The Chairman: We have gone on a long time so I would like to thank you both unless you have any burning issue you would like to add?

Paul Lashmar: There is one burning issue and it comes from what Gavin is saying and the issue about the Murdoch empire. I find it particularly disturbing that if we can bring students forward who understand investigative journalism, the next training ground is particularly public service and I am very depressed by the cuts within the BBC because I think it is hitting very hard on regional and local outlets; that is where they get trained. That is where they really learn how to do it because they are backed by an organisation that can help them with legal issues and it is being decimated at the moment.

Q490 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Mr Chairman, in terms of the BBC, we should point out that the BBC are increasing the budget for investigative journalism.

Paul Lashmar: But they are laying off people in the regional area. That has always been the feeding ground—the training ground—where you learned and you could make small mistakes before you moved up and become a “Panorama” producer or whatever. That really does worry me.

Gavin MacFadyen: I have three thoughts, if I could share them. I will be very brief, I promise. We asked a lot of investigators what they felt strongly about. These are the three things that emerged: first, that whistle-blowers have to be protected. There has to be legislation of a kind to prevent victimisation so that when they go back, if they report this to their employers they are not brutalised. They have suffered terribly as many do; there are many suicides and people end up as alcoholics, they cannot take the pressure. Most lose their families. So methods to protect them are really critical for investigative journalism because they are our life blood, they are the energy with which we can communicate these things and the evidence produced.

Secondly, shield laws to protect journalists from arbitrary arrest and to protect their sources and the evidence they produce. We live in a culture here in Britain where we have fewer of those protections than most European countries. Certainly much less than in the United States, where every state has a different kind of shield law; those laws tend to protect journalists’ ability to shield his sources from being forced to testify and from being forced to go public where you know he may get killed, or hurt or savaged in some way.

The third is the strengthening of the laws regarding evidence because what is extraordinary here are the number of cases in which state authorities destroy evidence and are not prosecuted. For example, somehow in many serious cases now of police brutality—killings in the cells, killings in the back of police cars, killings in police stations—oddly enough the CCTV images are missing. You ask who is responsible and nobody seems to know. Nobody has ever, ever been prosecuted in this country for destroying evidence of that kind.

That struck me as unusual and terrible. I would recommend if there is any way that you can use your influence to achieve that it would be wonderful.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much indeed. I am extremely grateful to you.