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Inquiry on

THE FUTURE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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Witness: Mr Richard Caseby

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Members present

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

Examination of Witness

Mr Richard Caseby, Managing Editor, The Sun

Q796 The Chairman: If I might formally get the proceedings under way, I would like to welcome you and thank you for coming here to give some evidence to us. I think you know what the inquiry is all about.

Mr Caseby: Yes.

The Chairman: We are trying to identify some of the trends in investigative journalism to help those who are dealing with other aspects of the fallout of the current scandal regarding hacking. You have kindly sent us a short CV; we are very grateful. I am glad to see that you did some of your early training in Cumbria; that is a good sign. You have the kind of experience we would be interested to hear from you, because we have not really heard anything much from the tabloids, and that is an important part of this discussion. Please feel free to be as candid as you can with us. If you do not think we have asked the question in quite the right way, please answer it in the way you think it is most helpful.

Mr Caseby: Thank you.
The Chairman: We are here to hear what you have to tell us, so perhaps I might get the ball rolling by saying that you obviously have a long, experienced career in journalism. We would be interested to know if you could give some examples of what you consider to be good investigative journalism with which you have been involved and, if you are prepared to, some examples of which perhaps you are less proud.

Mr Caseby: Okay. One of the ones I would suggest was a very impressive piece of investigative journalism was the FIFA investigation by The Sunday Times. I was on The Sunday Times, I was the Managing Editor at the time, and this was an investigation into the bids for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. It was set off not as a fishing expedition, but because there were widespread allegations of corruption within the FIFA voting system among the main 24-man committee. It was also apparent that Lord Triesman, who was the Chairman of the FA, had made some similar comments—some slightly more guarded comments—about possible corruption in FIFA, and in the event he lost his job because of that.

I think that triggered the interest of the paper, and they embarked on what I think was about a four-month investigation which covered Switzerland, France, Thailand, Egypt and New Zealand. There was a pair of reporters who visited all those countries, visiting members of the committee. They used subterfuge. They posed as a lobbying company, effectively, for an American bid and what they discovered was that several members of the committee were demanding money for their vote.

The Chairman: This is the FIFA Committee?

Mr Caseby: This is the FIFA Committee, yes. Amos Adamu, one of the Nigerian representatives, asked for £500,000 to be put in his son’s bank account, and another one by the name of Temarii asked for, I think it was, £1.5 million for a sports academy. So over time they built up a complete picture of how voting was rigged and, in the end, just to conclude on this, I think eight FIFA officials were suspended for between one to four years, and I think...
even the voting system changed, so that all member countries now have a vote and it is not just the nucleus of that 24-man committee. I think that was a really impressive piece of work by Jonathan Calvert and Claire Newell.

The Chairman: Any others or anything you think is less noble?

Mr Caseby: Less noble? I am trying to think of one where the wheels came off, but I cannot at the moment, and it is not through want of trying. Can I come back to that?

The Chairman: By all means, please, yes.

Mr Caseby: I am sure there is one. There will be one, I am sure.

The Chairman: Yes. We would be interested, if you are prepared to tell us.

Mr Caseby: No, I will come across one, I am sure.

Q797 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: I just wondered if you could help us define the importance of investigative journalism, or indeed watchdog journalism, in the commercial, reputational or branding areas of tabloid newspapers.

Mr Caseby: I spent 23 years on The Sunday Times, and I only joined The Sun in July, in the summer. So I have only had six months on The Sun, but I am getting a feel for the paper. It strikes me that broadsheets do not really tend to investigate perhaps the more mundane issues that really deeply affect working-class or ordinary people. You think of things like holiday rip-offs, loan shark thugs, people who prey on the elderly—people who are more exposed to those sorts of difficulties and crimes. But I can think of quite a number of investigations on The Sun—not that I have been directly involved with them—that have been very good and very much in the public interest.

Q798 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: That tends to be the watchdog journalism side of it, to identify with the readership and their interests. Just in commercial terms and in competitive terms, how important is celebrity exposure between the tabloids in that battle, do you think?
Mr Caseby: Between the tabloids or how important is celebrity exposure, for example, for The Sun?

Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: For The Sun and presumably in its competition with others. Do you have to spend a great deal of money just to keep pace with the competitive battle?

Mr Caseby: I make no apology for the fact The Sun is a very well-funded paper. It is extremely well supported by News Corporation, by News International, by Mr Rupert Murdoch himself; it is an extremely successful paper. I am sorry to go off the point here but, just to give an indication of how successful it is, when you think about the readership of national newspapers, the readership of, say, mass-market tabloids and mid-market tabloids account for 19 million readers in the NRS. Broadsheets, or so-called qualities, would account for 5 million readers. The Sun alone would account for well over maybe 7.5 million. It is a huge operation and one that is so successful because it understands its readers intimately and is a true reflection of their interests and concerns, otherwise they simply would not buy it.

Sorry, I should go on to your original question. Celebrity exposure sells papers. It is of interest to readers and there is an argument of course about whether all of it is in the public interest or not, and it is probably worth debating some that are and perhaps some that are not.

Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: In competitive terms, are you competing with the Express, the Mirror, the Star? Can they afford to pay as much as you can for celebrity exposés and so on?

Mr Caseby: The Mirror can, and certainly the Sunday Mirror can, because with the closure of The News of the World, the Sunday Mirror has put on hundreds of thousands of copies, so it is a successful newspaper. But yes, there is heavy competition between those titles. I would say
there is still even more competition perhaps from the threat of celebrity gossip sites, not so much in investigative celebrity journalism but just in celebrity gossip—for example, Gawker, TMZ and all these American sites that are highly successful and are certainly not run on the same rules as journalism in this country. They do not abide by any PCC code at all.

Q799 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: How many investigative journalists—if you give anybody that kind of definition—do you employ, or do you have an investigative unit of any kind?

Mr Caseby: There is not a unit on The Sun. There are particular reporters, for example, like Brian Flynn, who specialise in investigations. There are several, but I would hope, having come from a news background myself and run news operations, that any senior reporter would be able to mount an investigation or join in an informal group to join an investigative team.

Q800 The Chairman: Could I just come back to something you said? You were talking about the kind of things that your newspaper was investigating and you said that they were things which were of more interest perhaps to your readers than would be the case with some of the broadsheets. In terms of the cost and the mechanics of carrying out the investigation, are the kind of scams that you described relatively simple and straightforward to uncover compared to, say, some of the complicated things that you read about in the broadsheets?

Mr Caseby: I would say that, when you compare what is done on The Sun with what is done on The Sunday Times, it is probably cheaper to run the sort of investigative journalism that readers like in The Sun than it necessarily is with The Sunday Times, when you are talking about Sunday journalism, where the expectation is so much higher to have a really big story. You know, FIFA was a global story.
Some of the stories on The Sun, for example, are directed specifically to the readership. For example, one I remember—I cannot remember if it was Brian who did it—was about a security guard at a holiday camp in Clacton-on-Sea who was HIV-positive. He had infected a girl and there was a suspicion that he was infecting many more girls. There was an investigation. They found six girls. They wrote a story and other girls stepped forward who had been infected by him and they received treatment, and I think he was expelled from Britain. He was an asylum seeker from Zimbabwe. So that is smaller scale but no less important, in many respects, to readers.

The Chairman: Yes, absolutely, but in terms of just analysing what is going on and the challenges that face investigative journalism, cost, as we know, is an important aspect of it, so the point that I was trying to see whether or not you agreed with was my hunch that those kind of stories are much cheaper to do than really big international scandals, if that is the right word.

Mr Caseby: That is true, although I can think of one other one that was done on The Sun, I think about four or five years ago, which involved the sale of children. It was a child-trafficking ring out of Czechoslovakia, and it was Brian Flynn on that occasion who met up with a gang and he was offered a child, I think a nine-month old child, for £79,000. He immediately alerted Scotland Yard, Interpol and the Czech police and together they mounted an operation, which eventually resulted in 60 Czech police invading a compound where the gang was. They were all arrested. The Sun reporters gave evidence at their trial in Czechoslovakia, and the gang were jailed for up to about four years each. That was obviously a larger scale.

Q801 Lord Bragg: Do you differentiate between investigative stories that are in the public interest and those that are of interest to the public? The public interest would be
investigating expenses of us lot; that is public interest. Interest to the public—of much more interest to the public—is Hugh Grant.

**Mr Caseby:** Sure.

**Lord Bragg:** But do you think that interest to the public is a sufficient cause for investigating Hugh Grant?

**Mr Caseby:** When you say “investigating Hugh Grant” I do make a distinction between investigations like the ones I have been talking about, and reports about Hugh Grant that I would regard as celebrity journalism. I think you can make a distinction perhaps between interest of the public and public interest in—

**Lord Bragg:** What would that be?

**Mr Caseby:** Well, I can think of a case. Perhaps, I would say, the tragic incident whereby Gary Speed, the Welsh international manager, died—he committed suicide—a man much admired. Without doubt that is of great interest to the public and possibly a source of gossip, but the point is one could really never mount a public interest defence in investigating that on such a sensitive and private matter, and yet there he is—he is a celebrity, in effect, a very popular figure.

Then again, you can look on the other hand at someone like, for example, Rio Ferdinand, the England captain, who sought an injunction to stop a woman from telling all about a 14-year affair with him. He did not succeed in getting that injunction, and I think it cost him about £500,000. The story was run. It was not in *The Sun*; it was in another Sunday tabloid. The reasons for that were quite distinct, as I think came out when that injunction failed to materialise. The reasons were that there was a checklist, effectively, by the judge—he was a role model and he was an England captain. Can you say that all England captains are role models? Well, I think you could in that sense, because Capello had already fired John Terry, who—I want to make sure this is right—I believe had had an affair with another team-mate's
partner and had been sacked for that. Again, Rio Ferdinand had given an interview, I think to The News of the World, where he had said he was a reformed character—he was not the bad boy he used to be. Then again he also had, to bring it into the modern age, 1.5 million followers on his Twitter feed, where he talked all about his happy family life. So you had the conflicting, possibly hypocritical statements. So we have two public figures in the footballing world, two areas of interest for the public. In one case we really would not want to stray there, although one would concede that there is an interest to the public in it, whereas in the other there is an interest to the public absolutely, but there is also a public interest too.

The Chairman: But in the former it was all over the media, full stop.

Mr Caseby: Sorry, which one is that?

The Chairman: The case of the Gary Speed death.

Mr Caseby: It was, but there was no investigation as such as to what the reasons might have been for his suicide, as far as I can see.

Lord Bragg: Do you think there would have been if there had not been the Leveson inquiry?

Mr Caseby: It is an interesting question. I think over the last certainly five to 10 years the mood has changed. I think newspapers generally are more sensitive, and they are certainly more sensitive in terms of how they treat suicide.

Q802 Lord Bragg: But just as a matter of interest, do you have a set of rules? People like you are tremendously experienced, so do you nose out what is coming along, thinking, This is in the public interest; this is verging on a bit of fun, but still interesting enough and let’s go for it”? Is that laid down anywhere or do you and your senior colleagues just take it for granted that you can sort it out?

Mr Caseby: The senior colleagues, senior executives on the paper, all use the PCC code as a good basis for an ethical code, and I have to say that, even all through the evidence that
the Leveson inquiry has heard so far, no one really has had a bad word to say about the code itself. People might have criticism about the PCC and how it has acted, but they do not really have a criticism of the code; its breakdown of public interest is fairly robust and there are a lot of options there and there are lots of ways you have to justify yourself on public interest. So the code is part of a contractual obligation of every reporter on *The Sun*, and indeed *The Sunday Times*—it is in their contract. If they do not abide by the PCC code, they can be disciplined. There is that, and then there is the general experience of what works and what does not work—you get to smell these things in a way.

One other thing I might add about the interventionist nature of what might be in the public interest is the advent of the Bribery Act, which came into force in July. It has caused some consternation because one of the things the Bribery Act does not have is a public interest defence. Well, it does—it has a public interest defence, but only if you are a member of the Secret Service or the Armed Forces, so that does not really cover us. That means that under the Bribery Act, for anyone who is under a duty of confidence, for example, in an employment contract—which would be just about anyone—it could be termed a bribe if you paid them money for something, for a story or for information.

One thing that happened very soon after the Bribery Act came into force on 1 July was that a story popped up about a magistrate’s clerk in Redbridge, who allegedly—we had heard a rumour—would wipe your licence clean if you paid him £500. So the news desk came to me and asked, “Can we pay this man £500?” He is a public official, which puts him up there—we have police officers, you have public officials. It is a serious offence under the Bribery Act to bribe a public official. Even though there was no public interest defence in the Act, I thought, “Well, yes, let’s do it”. So we bribed him. *The Sun* technically broke the Bribery Act by paying this man £500. It was filmed, we wrote a story and the clerk was charged under the Bribery Act and for corruption of public office, and he was jailed about a month or two ago.
for six years. He received two years under the Bribery Act and six years for corruption to run concurrently, so he received six years in all. But that was a risk for the reporters, and I have to say that, in the era we are in at the moment, those are sometimes risks that they are unwilling to take.

**Q803 Lord Bragg:** Can I finally come in on this public interest from a different angle because it interests a lot of people, and it obviously interests a lot of celebrities themselves. We hear a lot of the Leveson inquiry. Do you think that they have a point? Do you think that they deserve to be left alone, or just because they appear in a couple of films or three or four films they are fair game? What is your view on that?

**Mr Caseby:** There is a great quote from Auberon Waugh back in the 1970s, when he put up a defence of the sort of gossip that Nigel Dempster, who you probably remember, used to sell in the *Daily Mail*. Can I read it to you, because I think it is absolutely on the button?

**The Chairman:** Yes, by all means.

**Mr Caseby:** I think I have it in a note here. He said, “If as a famous person you are in the habit of doing things which would make you ashamed if they were more widely known, then you have a clear choice: change your habit, change your attitude to them, retreat from the public stage, and the other course of action, cross your fingers and hope the tabloids don’t discover it. It is not reasonable to expect the entire structure of a free press to be dismantled to accommodate your foibles.” I thought that was perfect.

**Q804 Baroness Deech:** You have strayed into this already a bit, quite interestingly. I was going to ask you whether it is ever right to break the law in order to uncover a story which is in the public interest. I would be particularly interested in whether your attitude to this has changed depending on whether you are with *The Sunday Times* or *The Sun*.

**Mr Caseby:** No, my attitude has not really changed. As I explained earlier about the Bribery Act, we technically broke the law. I met Ken Clarke at the Society of Editors conference
about a month ago, and I put that to them—that basically we needed a public interest
defence in that. He was not necessarily convinced. When a reporter comes to me with a
story like that and is asking for some sort of sanction to go ahead and report it, I take that
decision in conjunction with a house lawyer and, if we are not so sure, I have four QCs on
round-the-clock call who I can call up for advice.
But the only get-out really is that, if a reporter is perhaps arrested in something that I have
sanctioned or one of our lawyers has sanctioned, the company would protect them—they
would obviously give them a very strong legal defence. Our only position would be to go to
the DPP and say, “It is simply not in the public interest to pursue this prosecution”, but that
is not a lot you can promise someone who is risking an entire career.

Q805 Baroness Deech: So would you change the law to give journalists more cover?

Mr Caseby: I would on the Bribery Act, yes, and I think that once we are through Leveson
there may be some rolling lobbying to try and make that happen, but I do not think it would
happen before the Leveson inquiry is finished.

Just one thing while we are talking about Leveson—I did want to make some comments and
an opening statement about some of the things that have occurred over the last few days,
about investigative journalism in particular with The Guardian and how that story has
changed. If I had an opportunity at the end, could I say that?

The Chairman: Yes, at the end.

Mr Caseby: At the end?

The Chairman: Please. I think that is the right thing to do, at the end. I should have asked
at the beginning if you wanted to say anything, but I forgot. I am sorry.

Mr Caseby: That is okay.
Q806 Baroness Fookes: We have heard quite a lot during the course of this inquiry about the public relations industry and the fact that it is quite well-paid and quite powerful. Does The Sun rely very much on taking press releases and using them or not?

Mr Caseby: Not to my knowledge, and not that I have seen. I have obviously taken a close interest in how business is conducted at The Sun. I work with Dominic Mohan, the editor, and he is a very reasonable, very collegiate man, and everything I have seen tells me that people work extremely hard to stand stories up. The vast majority of people are not sat there going through press releases or just sitting on the phone talking to people. They are out and about talking to people face to face—whether it is news, whether it is showbiz, they meet people. That is human contact. There is no replacement for it really, even in this digital age.

Baroness Fookes: So if you did get a press release which interested you, you would then follow it up just as another source of information that you might want to follow.

Mr Caseby: Well, it could be a prompt or something like that, but the number of press releases that might have any sort of origination in a news story would be tiny. Your bin would be full of them. Just because the PR industry has exploded, it does not necessarily mean—

Baroness Fookes: It has not exploded at The Sun.

Mr Caseby: Well, it has not exploded into The Sun. They have been exploding in a wastepaper basket, but it has not exploded on The Sun.

Baroness Fookes: Okay, thank you.

Q807 Lord St John of Bletso: I remember speaking to quite a well-known PR professional, name not mentioned, who was saying that up to 75% of his work was keeping people out of the newspaper and not in the newspaper. Do you think this is an established practice?
**Mr Caseby:** Yes, it is. Take Max Clifford, for example. I do not know him personally, but I have seen him often quoted, certainly on the television. That is what his job is most of the time these days—trying to keep people out of the press.

**Q808 Bishop of Norwich:** Can we move on to the relationship between the printed paper and the online website? When Alan Rusbridger was here, he told us *The Guardian* sells 250,000 copies a day, but has 3 million daily online users. What is the relationship in terms of numbers between the circulation of *The Sun* and unique users of your website, whether on a weekly or a monthly basis?

**Mr Caseby:** Monday to Friday, *The Sun* sells about 2.8 million. It sells roughly 3 million on a Saturday, which is the biggest sale, and on our website we have 25 million unique users a month—probably a little more than that now. It is interesting what you say about Alan Rusbridger—you know, “I have a little paper than sells 250,000 or 260,000, which is minuscule”, and, “Our website is booming and it is all over the world”. But the problem there is that he does not have any business model at all. *The Guardian* loses, I believe, £36 million a year, and I think their new CEO said recently that if they did not find a business model, they would be out of business in three to five years. So you may have the curious case of *The Guardian* being out of business before the end of the phone-hacking investigations.

**Bishop of Norwich:** What do you see as the future relationship between the printed edition and the website?

**Mr Caseby:** It is not so much the website now. I think that the smartphone and tablets are far more interesting and are possibly a clearer way forward. I think that if you take a cross-section of *The Sun* readers, you will find that, surprisingly you might think, 19% own an iPhone and 11% own a tablet or an iPad, probably an iPad. I think that is quite high considering that the average salary of a *Sun* reader is probably about £16,000. But then again,
because of the scale of *The Sun*, because it is so big, you can say that *The Sun* has more ABC1 readers than *The Telegraph* and *Guardian* put together, so it covers a lot of people.

**The Chairman:** We certainly have a number of copies downstairs in the Library.

**Mr Caseby:** I am pleased to hear that, but—

**Bishop of Norwich:** But do you have to pay for online *Sun*?

**Mr Caseby:** The website is free to use, and there is good reason for it. We are developing another smartphone app and we are talking about possibilities of whether to charge or not for that. The thing is that *The Sun* is hugely profitable as a printed issue and it will continue to be so for many years because of the nature of its readership. There is always a danger of trying to cannibalise that too quickly into a digital business model that really does not have great sources of revenue. So it is a balancing act.

**Bishop of Norwich:** So you are not making any money out of your 25 million monthly users, are you?

**Mr Caseby:** Yes, there is advertising. The 25 million are not necessarily that important; it is the 12 million who are UK users that are important, because that is what UK advertisers want to know about—“How many UK users do you have?” So you do make money on advertising, absolutely, but nowhere near the same sort of volumes you can with print advertising.

**Bishop of Norwich:** Is the story in the paper extended in the online edition?

**Mr Caseby:** Often with stories the juggling act is deciding whether to break a story online during the day before you go to press. Those are the decisions that have to be made.

**The Chairman:** Do you have a general rule about that or do you take each one on its merits?
Mr Caseby: It is story by story. It is a case-by-case basis. It can depend on a lot of things. One of the rivals might be doing it and you may have a steal on someone else's story. There are lots of factors.

Q809 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: Do you try to use your 25 million people in any way to source stories from them? Is that a productive relationship?

Mr Caseby: Well, we have an advertisement on page 2, as many tabloids do, saying, “If you have a story, ring us or email us. We pay for stories.” We make no bones about that, and neither does the Mirror or the People or any other, and we get a lot of tips, that is true.

Q810 Lord St John of Bletso: You mentioned that The Guardian runs at a loss, while The Sun is obviously in an enviable position of running at a profit, but do your journalists concentrate mostly on the print version or the online version of the paper?

Mr Caseby: They do both, but print comes first. It is not because one cannot see a way for the future; it is because of the print—it is because it is a profitable area. It is most important, so it is quite key to preserve the print operation, so that comes first generally.

Lord St John of Bletso: So do you agree with Ian Hislop when he said that people are more likely to believe what they read in print rather than what they read online?

Mr Caseby: I think it depends on the reputational brand. There are so many different blogs out there that are all commentary and they are not about news gathering, whereas The Sun online has the same reputation as the paper, really.

Lord St John of Bletso: To what extent do you think that is going to have an impact on the future of investigative journalism?

Mr Caseby: The one asset of being online, and I have certainly discovered this on The Sunday Times, is that when you have a large-scale investigation, because you do not have to print any extra pages, there is no cost for paper and you can put up all the documents that you gathered. You can really go to town and say, “This is how we did it and this is the
evidence and look at it all”. You know, it is endless what you can put on online, depending on the sort of degree of interest people have.

Q811 Lord Gordon of Strathblane: I am just wondering, in the light of the fact that you foresee a printed future for The Sun for quite some time to come, whether you think we should have any concerns about protecting newspapers—with emphasis on the paper. Or do you think that, provided that there are news organisations, even if they are operating only digitally, the public interest would be served?

Mr Caseby: I do not think you have any real worries about The Sun. An area where I said there is a great worry, and personally speaking because I come from that background, is regional newspapers. It is absolutely tragic what has happened to regional newspapers, which were a great starting ground—a great training ground. I love regional newspapers. I am quite old-fashioned; I like people to come from that sort of background and to have made their mistakes on a small scale before they get to nationals. What has been seen—certainly on regional newspapers—is the way that the local councils have almost squeezed them out of business. They gather up all the usual personnel ads that would normally go in a local paper and they put them in their own version of a local Pravda to promote the interests only of local councils, and I think it is tragic.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Or on the internet, to be fair.

Mr Caseby: I get one through my door, but I will take your word on that one.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Is that trend in any way reversible? Can anything be done about the local press?

Mr Caseby: I am not sure what the solution is on the regional press. I have been horrified over the last 15 years. There are magistrates’ courts that are not being covered; law is not being seen to be done in action. It is a great shame.
Lord Gordon of Strathblane: On the basis that nature and journalists abhor a vacuum, one envisages that at least there will be a digital platform locally doing something about it.

Mr Casey: There have been experiments with micro-journalism—in effect, ultra-local journalism. There were one or two experiments in Wales that were quite successful. But in a way, because we are all finding our way in this digital future, it is like the invention of the printing press; because it is a revolution things get broken much more quickly than they get invented and we are still in that period.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Perhaps the key lies in how we get somebody to pay for it. How are people going to pay for investigative journalism on a digital platform?

Mr Casey: That is a good question. The Sunday Times and The Times have a paywall and think that does show a real way forward for them. I think The Sunday Times has about 120,000 paying users on the iPad and it looks great. I am not saying that as shameless self-promotion because I was involved with it; I think it looks fantastic. What is fantastic about the business models of newspapers or magazines on the iPad is that you can probably charge about eight or nine times as much for an advertisement on the iPad as you can on a website.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane: Really? What other funding models are going to be open to local investigative journalists?

Mr Casey: I honestly do not have any solutions. I remember writing about this when I was on The Sunday Times, trying to promote stories or trying to run a campaign to try and at least stop local councils killing off their own independent local newspapers.

Q812 Lord St John of Bletso: Do you think that investigative journalists in local papers and so on are being shied off because of the risk of being sued?

Mr Casey: Absolutely I do. Yes, I do. I have heard that already from one or two people in the Society of Editors.
Q813 The Chairman: Can I go back to where you started? You said, entirely fairly, that part of the point of The Sun is to sell newspapers.

Mr Caseby: Well, no, I would not say that. That maintains the funding model.

The Chairman: What is the point of the product that you are doing in terms of what are you trying to convey to your readership?

Mr Caseby: What is The Sun, in effect?

The Chairman: Yes. Is that a silly question?

Mr Caseby: What is the essence of The Sun? The Sun is a great ball of fun really. It has sensation, it has news, it has celebrity, it has campaigns, and it is connected. That is what it does; it connects with the readers. It is like meeting the man down in the pub who always has a really interesting story to tell and you never know quite what he is going to say, and the thing is he always says it in a really witty way. That is it, and it says it concisely.

The Chairman: What about a national newspaper such as The Times. You would not quite describe The Times in that way, would you?

Mr Caseby: No.

The Chairman: How would you describe The Times?

Mr Caseby: I think that you ought to ask James. How would I describe The Times?

The Chairman: Or The Sunday Times, if that is easier, because it is not that dissimilar.

Mr Caseby: They are different newspapers, actually. I think there is a different culture on The Times from the one on The Sunday Times.

The Chairman: They are not dissimilar, that is what I was saying, in the relationship with The Sun.

Mr Caseby: I think The Times is slightly more sober than The Sunday Times. The Sunday Times, in my experience, has a more sort of swashbuckling attitude to the world and investigative journalism. That said, I remember a very good piece of investigative journalism
in The Times recently—and one that was not expected to be necessarily popular—and that was the investigation conducted into the exploitation of teenage white girls by Asian gangs. I thought that was a really significant investigation. It was great work.

Q814 Earl of Selborne: I think it would be true to say that when you see surveys of whether readers trust red-top papers, quite frankly the trust level is low. I have a quote here from 2008, which says of red-top reporters that their “reputation was so low it that it could hardly sink any further”. The only consolation was that they were “overtaken … by estate agents.”

Mr Caseby: Where was that from?

Earl of Selborne: It was quoted in the British Journalism Review of 2008. Does that matter to you, or does it matter to The Sun, that you are held in low regard?

Mr Caseby: I do not think we are. I do not believe that because when I look at what our readers tell us—we do our own surveys of what our readers tell us—72% of regular readers almost always buy it. They love it. It is part of their daily life, it really is. You do not get any other newspaper with that sort of allegiance.

Q815 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston: Could I ask you about Insight, which is probably the most famous piece of investigative journalism. The common belief is that the investment by The Sunday Times in investigative journalism and Insight has declined over the decades. Has that been the case and, if so, is there a reason for the decline in investment in that particular unit?

Mr Caseby: First of all, because I was the money man effectively—I was the managing editor—I can say that that is not the case. That FIFA investigation I talked about earlier cost several hundred thousand pounds for that sort of scale over five months. In a way, you can go to those investigations and two months down the line you still do not know whether you are there or not. You will remember this because you worked on Insight, didn’t you? You do
not quite know when you are going to deliver and it can be a tremendous pressure for the reporters. Two or three months into an investigation and it might not come to anything. I am pleased to say that John Witherow is happy to take those sorts of risks and gambles. The people who work on Insight, led by Jonathan Calvert, are off-diary and they do their own thing. There is a regime of control, through the head of news and the editor and the managing editor, and they meet frequently, maybe once a week, during the course of an investigation to talk about different angles. But I have to say that, no, The Sunday Times is one of the few newspapers that does invest in journalism and invest in investigative journalism.

Q816  The Chairman: At the beginning I asked you, and you said you would think about it, whether you thought there were some examples where you thought the wheels had come off badly.

Mr Caseby: Yes, sorry, I have not had a chance.

The Chairman: It may be an unfair question.

Mr Caseby: Those were not the examples I was trying to think of when I was coming here, actually. There will be one. I really will try.

Q817  The Chairman: Then you said you wanted to make a bit of a statement.

Mr Caseby: Yes. You have probably all seen different stories about the phone-hacking investigation and how that has slightly turned. I would say it has more than slightly turned. With the revelations that we have read about over the weekend, and in particular about the Leveson inquiry yesterday, I would say it is now clear that Alan Rusbridger effectively sexed up his investigation into phone hacking and the wider issue of wrongdoing in the media. As I am sure you are aware, the Metropolitan Police have now confirmed that The News of the World was not to blame for deleting the specific mobile phone messages of Milly Dowler that gave false hope to her parents that she was still alive. But let me be clear: phone hacking by
The News of the World was wrong and it is rightfully condemned by all, and I would add my voice to that. I would condemn that.

But The Guardian’s statement of fact in over 34 articles that the paper had given parents false hope is quite another matter, because that accusation turned what was natural condemnation into a wave of such utter public revulsion that The News of the World could not function as a going concern anymore and it had to be shut down. I know that because I was the joint managing editor at the time. In short, it was the twist of the knife. The Guardian’s false allegation directly resulted in 200 people being thrown out of work. But today I can see that Alan Rusbridger is still finding it hard to acknowledge how seriously this repeated error has undermined his paper’s authority. In fact, he tried to justify it yesterday, saying his paper reported the facts as they were known at the time. The trouble is that they were never facts; they were only ever allegations.

Then, as soon as The News of the World closed, Alan Rusbridger turned his attention to The Sun and he hoped, I believe, to capitalise on public revulsion and I believe he set his hopes on trying to close another News International title. Within days of the closure of The News of the World he stated as fact, with a front-page splash, that The Sun had hacked the medical records of Gordon Brown’s son, who suffers from cystic fibrosis. This was utterly false and I proved it to be so because I traced the source and I got a signed affidavit from him. The Guardian published an apology to its front-page story on page 34.

Then on the second day of the Leveson inquiry Alan Rusbridger published a front-page story stating as fact that The Sun had door-stepped a junior counsel for the inquiry and the paper used a rather disgusting metaphor to describe that act at the doorstep. The Guardian said it showed The Sun held the inquiry in contempt and had effectively defecated on his Lordship’s desk. It was calculated to inflict the maximum damage to The Sun. This again was utterly false. The Guardian published an apology on page 44.
Mr Rusbridger has shown a pattern of behaviour that poses a serious question over his motivations. He has an agenda against the popular press, a section of the media he clearly holds in contempt. *The Guardian’s* own much-vaunted ethical code quotes from CP Scott. Scott talks about a newspaper’s primary purpose being to gather news, and his quote is, “At the peril of its soul it must see that the supply is not tainted”. As my examples show, I think that the supply at *The Guardian* under Mr Rusbridger is tainted.

Yesterday I called in person on the Chief Constable of Surrey in the hope of investigating matters further and, although I waited for two hours outside his office, he declined to see me. Later that afternoon Lord Justice Leveson himself signalled that he wished to have an explanation from the Chief Constable of the Surrey force. I hope that now the Surrey police will co-operate with the Leveson inquiry, as indeed I hope the lawyer, Mr Mark Lewis, will do if he is called to explain any role he may have had in this matter. I am reassured that Sir Brian Leveson, a man of forensic focus, is absolutely determined to get to the bottom of these matters.

**The Chairman:** Thank you for that statement. I can understand why you might have wanted to make it. As I am sure you will appreciate, that is not a direct subject matter of the inquiry we are doing, but we have heard what you said.

**Mr Caseby:** I thought it related to investigative journalism.

**Q818 The Chairman:** We cannot make any comment on the particularity of any of the allegations contained in it. It is on the record and that is where it rests, so thank you.

One small point, finally: interestingly, when your predecessor, Rebekah Wade, was talking to us—certainly to me; I am not sure if it was any other members of the Committee—some years ago, she was talking about the relationship of *The Sun* and its readers. It is obviously an important part of the way in which you approach your publication.

**Mr Caseby:** Absolutely.
The Chairman: From your own internal analysis, have you worked out which of the things about *The Sun* they like best and which are the things that are less popular with them?

Mr Caseby: Partly. I can tell you a few things that I know that readers do like. The economy at the moment is not great, as we all know. Many of the readers are not especially wealthy and anything we can do to help them they really like, obviously.

The Chairman: Do you mean by that financially, or just cheer them up?

Mr Caseby: Well, no, financially and cheer them up. For example, there is a campaign called Sun Employment that has been running for a couple of years. We have a battle bus that goes round the country. It takes employers and hosts roadshows for people to come and see what jobs are available or training opportunities, and that has put 50,000 people in either a job or a training opportunity over the last couple of years. That is the sort of thing that connects with readers; that is the sort of thing where they think, “You’re my paper”.

Q819 Lord Bragg: I would like to ask a question that Ian Hislop raised, and I agreed with him, when he said that people are more likely to believe something they read in print. Alan Rusbridger, who you were mentioning a moment or two ago, is convinced that the online exposure is much bigger and it is very difficult to deny the fact that it is much more influential. What is your view on that?

Mr Caseby: As I say, I have no research on that. It would be purely subjective. It is probably because I am getting old but I still like the physicality of the printed word. It feels as though it carries more authority, but that is purely a personal point of view.

The Chairman: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Mr Caseby: No. I am happy to answer any more questions if you have any at all.

The Chairman: That is very kind. Thank you very much for coming.