SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

New Inquiry announcement: Press Regulation

The House of Lords Communications Committee, chaired by Lord Best, will conduct a short inquiry to find out where things stand on press regulation.

Background

On 29 November 2012 Lord Justice Leveson published his report into the “culture, practices and ethics of the press”. The report found that, “There have been too many times when, chasing the story, parts of the press have acted as if its own code, which it wrote, simply did not exist. This has caused real hardship and, on occasion, wreaked havoc with the lives of innocent people whose rights and liberties have been disdained.”

In response to the Leveson report, on 30 October 2013, a Royal Charter on press regulation was granted. This allowed for one or more independent self-regulatory bodies for the press to be established. Any such body would be recognised and overseen by a Recognition Panel. This Panel came into existence on 3 November 2014.

The Press Complaints Commission, which had been the voluntary regulatory body for the industry, closed in September 2014. It was replaced by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). In November 2014 a second body, the Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS) was set up. Neither of these bodies has, as yet, sought recognition under the Royal Charter.

Many newspaper groups have signed up to IPSO. The Guardian, the Independent and the Financial Times are notable exceptions.

The Committee will be holding oral evidence sessions in January 2015. These will look at the developments in press regulation since the Leveson report in 2012. It will seek to understand the current state of play and set out what is the policy of the Government and others in relation to the future.

Oral evidence

The Committee’s first evidence session is expected be held on Tuesday 13th January at 3:30 pm in Committee Room 2, Palace of Westminster.

Witnesses

Oral evidence will be sought from a cross-section of interested parties including: academics, the Press Recognition Panel, IPSO, IMPRESS, Hacked Off and representatives of newspapers and other publishers.

2 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29980886
The Committee intends to conclude its evidence sessions towards the end of January 2015 to allow it to report before the end of the current Parliament.

Issues the Committee will consider within the course of this inquiry, include:

- What is the current process for someone wishing to make a complaint against a newspaper?

- How do the public know to whom to complain?

- Is it clear what conduct merits a complaint?

- What are the differences between the various bodies such as IPSO and IMPRESS, including the differences in the criteria for accepting and evaluating complaints?

- How important are the terms for membership; are these a deterrent to membership of a regulatory body?

- What is likely to be the effect of more than one regulator on a) the industry and b) the consumer? Does the current situation provide an adequate balance between consumer protection and press freedom?

- Will the funding mechanisms in place for the replacement organisation/s ensure effective regulation?

- Do any of the new regulators intend to seek recognition? If so, or if not, is there agreement as to the consequences and next steps?

- What variety of publications are covered by the current/intended regulations?

- What are the similarities and differences between the regulations for press and other forms of media?

- Who is taking an overall view of the system of press regulation in the UK?

We are not soliciting written evidence for this inquiry because it is intended to set out the current position rather than make recommendations about the future of press regulation. If, however, any individual or organisation would like to make a written submission they should, in the first instance, contact the Clerk.