

Press Regulation - The Truth!

When Not Buying It went to meet IMPRESS, the proposed new press regulator, we thought we better beef up on the Leveson Report and more. This was in Jan 2017, a time when the press were screaming that something called Section 40 would mean the end of free speech as we know it. Here's what we found out:

Leveson on Press Regulation

The Leveson Report recommended that the press *should regulate itself* but whatever regulator is put forward needs to meet basic requirements that it will properly protect the public.

Of course, this does beg the question WHY should the press (in fact all the media come to think of it) regulate itself? No other industry regulates itself. Why should the media, run by corporates, or exceptionally powerful men (often pornographers)? Run as for-profit industries with a clear underlying agenda and huge power to harm and influence? Anyway, that's just our silly human rights perspective rearing its inconvenient head .. back to the story..

In order to do this he recommended a totally independent body, **The Recognition Panel**, to scrutinize any press regulation system that is put forward and decide if it was adequate ie in the public interest, effective etc. The panel has no role itself in regulating the press and is *independent* of the press and Government.

Royal Charter

Parliament agreed to this **Press Recognition Panel (PRP)** in 2013 by a **Royal Charter** on Press Self Regulation (less controversial to the press apparently than an Act of Parliament which would have made it a 'Press Law').

The press then put forward their own regulator, IPSO, replacing the previously equally dismal self-regulator, the PCC. But this fails to meet the requirements of the Recognition Panel on several counts and so has never been approved.

In the meantime Max Mosely and others abused by the press set up IMPRESS as an alternative regulator. This *does* meet Recognition Panel requirements and so has been approved by it. But has been made controversial by the press because it has not come from them but from public figures harmed by the industry including some with scandalous backgrounds*.

Section 40

Leveson did *not* say the press *had to sign up* to an approved regulator but merely wanted to encourage them to. To do this, he suggested that *unless* the press sign up to a recognised regulator they will have to pay their own legal fees if they are ever sued. If they signed up though they would not have to pay fees, it would be covered by the regulator as would arbitration.

This suggestion is covered in **Section 40** of the Crime and Courts Acts 2013. It has not yet been implemented because of the furore put up by the press! There was recently a consultation on Section 40 (and whether to implement Part 2 of Leveson) which is why this has been in the news recently. Or rather why there have been headlines screaming that the press will be forced to come under state control and th

Leveson Part 2

Leveson Enquiry Part 1 looked at the 'ethics' and working of the press
Part 2 is supposed to look at wrong doing between press and police.

Of course, the press have been kicking and screaming against Part 2 from happening. Lord Leveson has already said he won't be chairing it!

IPSO

The current press regulator, set up by the press itself is IPSO, replaces the previous 'regulator', the PCC. Codes appear fine on the face of it although of course make no reference to promoting harmful attitudes or stereotyping. But adjudication is carried out by press members, it is funded by the press, they do not report or monitor complaints and so on. As such it does not meet the requirements of the PRP, so IPSO is not a recognized regulator.

The incendiary, mis-reporting of Brexit (and more recently, Section 40), the hate-filled portrayal of immigrants and of course, never ending objectification of women, is a reminder of how wholly inadequate press regulation is and has always been.

What Next?

Either IPSO has to change drastically to meet PRP requirements. If not, the only alternative future press regulator is IMPRESS. And once Section 40 is finally approved, press will have to join IMPRESS to protect against being sued.

IMPRESS

Impress is funded by a Trust set up by Max Mosely. Legally, Trust money and how IMPRESS spends it is totally independent of Max Mosely but he is perhaps not what you might call the ideal candidate to be behind a new and enlightened regulator. And the link with him has given the press a field day:

For starters, Max is the son of Oswald Mosely, the leader of British fascist politics in the 1930s. Then there is the fact that he was heavily involved in Formula 1 and its 'supremo' Bernie Ecclestone – far from the most savoury high profile figure. And then of course was his real 'bad press day' - when the News of the World exposed Max's apparent penchant for 'Nazi' S&M group sex with 5 'hookers'. This was devastating to his family and not long afterwards his son, Alexander, already suffering from depression and drug abuse, committed suicide. Mosely believes this happened in large part because of the News of the World expose, so he set up a Trust Fund in his son's name to fund a regulator to end press abuse, IMPRESS