

Press regulation

Thursday, 31 October 2013

I've not made many public comments on the issue of press regulation but the time has come to do so. I consider the entire fiasco a storm in a teacup and, oddly, a media created "good story" that, like so many others, has gone out of control.

Was there phone tapping or hacking or anything else? Of course there was. It's one of the weapons of good journalism and good detective work. Should it have stopped? Of course, when it became illegal.

Times change. Just as morality changes.

I do think it unfair to condemn behaviour of the past when morality - and the law - was different.

Was it wrong to tap Milly Dowler's phone? Yes, because it was illegal, but when the motive was to find a missing girl (even though that was not to be nice but to get a "good story"), understandable.

Why there has been so much fuss since (giving false hope to parents? Is that a bad thing?) I can understand - it was a "good story".

You may have guessed by now - the problem with the media is that a "good story" overwhelms all else. That is what needed to be sorted - by the media itself (and it is beyond me why this has become just a newspaper thing; times change).

Yes, the PCC was dreadful; run by, and dominated by, the perpetrators. It needed a major overhaul. But the basics were there.

So I don't think the millions used on the Leveson Inquiry were well spent.

I appeared in front of Lord Leveson. I thought the way some authorities use the media should indeed be investigated. How the police and CPS use the media to get convictions and encourage allegations; a method originated by the publicist Max Clifford for the false allegations against myself, for example.

But the media generally behaved as expected in my case; they simply did what I assumed they would do, given the actions of the police and CPS. As they had done during the Hillsborough tragedy, for example.

How police and CPS use and abuse the media in order to get results (which, I'm sure, they often feel are justified) needs immediate attention. The media itself has been strangely lax in chasing that "good story" (not strangely, actually, because it means fewer "good stories" get leaked to them).

So; editors and journalists badly needed a crack across the knuckles and a lesson in behaviour, ramifications and responsibility. They needed teaching how decent human beings should, and must, behave.

Judges should be told to issue serious penalties - not fines but banning publication for limited periods.

But Royal Charter? Laws?

Bollocks. And very expensive bollocks.