

<p>1 2 (2.10 pm) 3 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Good afternoon, sir. We have two 4 witnesses this afternoon. The first witness is 5 Mr Jon Snow. 6 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you. 7 MR JONATHAN GEORGE SNOW (sworn) 8 Questions by MS PATRY-HOSKINS 9 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Please sit down, please make yourself 10 comfortable, Mr Snow. 11 First of all, could you give your full name to the 12 inquiry? 13 A. Jonathan George Snow. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Mr Snow, thank you very much indeed 15 for your statement and the assistance you have provided. 16 I am grateful. 17 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: You have provided us with a witness 18 statement dated 14 May 2012. Could you please confirm 19 that is your formal evidence to this inquiry? 20 A. That is my formal evidence, yes. 21 Q. If I move on to your career history, please, Mr Snow. 22 I know there was something you wanted to say about the 23 fact that the views in your statement are your own and 24 do not necessarily represent the views of your 25 employers?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 dynamic between media and politicians has changed 2 considerably over the years. Can we pause there. When 3 you say "the media", what do you mean? 4 A. I encompass both the written and the electronic media, 5 yes. 6 Q. You then go on to differentiate between broadcast media 7 and newspapers. You say this: 8 "Television and video have long been governed by 9 a regulator and that regulation has been rationalised 10 and strengthened. The regime ensures that I am aware of 11 conflicts and of interest and constantly aware of the 12 need for balance." 13 Then you say this: 14 "The ownership aspects of the regulatory regime have 15 no so far impacted on my work." 16 Before we move on to what you say about newspapers, 17 let me ask about the relationship between television or 18 broadcast journalists and politicians in this way: Ofcom 19 is your regulator. As a political journalist and 20 somebody who obviously regularly interviews politicians 21 and, some might say, holds them to account, has the 22 Ofcom system of regulation, in your view, ever hindered 23 you in that process? 24 A. I can't honestly think of a single occasion on which 25 I have wanted to proceed with something which I believed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>
<p>1 A. The views in this statement are entirely my own and they 2 have no bearing on anything my employers may think or 3 otherwise wish. 4 Q. Thank you very much indeed. Turning to your career 5 history, it is set out at paragraph 1 of your statement. 6 I will just summarise it and you can tell me if I have 7 any of it wrong. You are, as I'm sure we all know, the 8 main presenter for Channel 4 News, a position you have 9 held since 1989. You joined ITN in 1976 as a reporter 10 and in the public realm, you have held a number of 11 positions, including trustee of the National Gallery, 12 trustee of the Tate Gallery, member of the Tate Modern 13 Council and chair of Tate members. 14 You have also written a book about your journey in 15 journalism called "Shooting History" and you have also 16 written articles down the years for the broadsheets and 17 a few times also for the Daily Mail and the Mail on 18 Sunday. Have I accurately summarised your career 19 history, Mr Snow? 20 A. That is entirely accurate, yes. 21 Q. Let's move on to the first section of your statement, 22 dealing with the relationship between politicians and 23 the media. 24 You explain at paragraph 2(a) of your statement that 25 from your perspective as a television journalist, the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>	<p>1 to be in the public interest and journalistically sound 2 that has been stopped by anything to do with regulation. 3 Obviously there are lots of compliance issues about 4 right to reply and the rest of it, but I have never 5 found it a burden. 6 Q. Again, before we turn to newspapers, you note at the end 7 of this section, right before the answer on 2(b), at the 8 top of page 2: 9 "Viewers need to be assured that the regulatory 10 system accords them a right to question whether we have 11 done our job properly and to provide for them to 12 complain should they wish to demand a wrong be put 13 right. Ofcom has maintained a useful and balanced role 14 in this regard." 15 Can you expand a little on that; why do you take the 16 view this role has been provided? 17 A. Well, I think that the role of the regulator has 18 improved vastly over the years. When I first started in 19 television it was pretty kind of shambolic. There was 20 very little legal input into it. It was conducted by 21 well meaning and bright people but nevertheless it 22 wasn't as coherent as it is now. I can illustrate this 23 by saying when I started in the 70s you would see 24 a lawyer in the office perhaps once a month. Maybe 25 a little more, maybe once a week sometimes. Now there</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

<p>1 isn't one single story that I am participating in on 2 Channel 4 News which is not checked by a lawyer. 3 So the whole sense of respecting the regulatory 4 process is very much alive and with us, but I would say 5 that the legal scrutiny and the regulatory scrutiny is 6 scrutiny designed to try to get the story on the air, 7 but to ensure it gets on the air in a fair and balanced 8 way. 9 As far as the written press is concerned, I mean, 10 well, I can't say that any of us looking in on the PCC 11 process can honestly look to it and say there is a great 12 example of regulatory authority. Judges are judges in 13 their own cause, so you have editors who have often 14 themselves offended judging other editors. It seems to 15 me that their regulatory process is exactly the 16 antithesis of ours, which is in fact to ensure that the 17 public is not protected but that the newspaper publishes 18 and is not damned. 19 Q. We will come on to discuss perhaps the future of press 20 regulation in a little more detail. Can we move back 21 though to newspapers. You explain that you consider 22 there to be a difference between broadcast journalists 23 and newspapers. What is the difference and what special 24 pressures are their on newspapers, in your view? 25 A. I think the difference fundamentally is that newspapers Page 5</p>	<p>1 building blocks have to fit then I think you start to 2 get a wildly distorted account of what is actually going 3 on. I think that happens a great deal. 4 Q. Could it not be said that an informed reader would be 5 able to differentiate between the news and comment 6 aspects of a particular story or article? 7 A. Yes, one should never underestimate the capacity of the 8 viewer and the reader to see through what the media is 9 up to. That I fully accept. But sometimes some of this 10 is extremely cleverly done and if it is done in 11 extremely emotive terms, as with issues like welfare or 12 immigration or any of the great political issues of our 13 time, if it becomes contaminated with a view that a 14 certain course of action should be pursued and the news 15 story is made to fit these parameters, then I think you 16 get into some difficulty. 17 Q. All right. Well, you raise it as a concern. This 18 blurring between the two is already prohibited by the 19 PCC editors' code. I don't know if you are aware of 20 that. Is there anything more that could be done to 21 address this concern, in your view? 22 A. Well, I think the biggest thing that can be done is very 23 clear signposting. I don't one should in any way treat 24 the reader as an idiot, but I think it should be very 25 clear -- and I believe -- my own experience of living in Page 7</p>
<p>1 are clearly opinionated. They have an opinion from 2 which they spring and you don't need me to tell you who 3 springs from which proclivity but it would be blind not 4 to accept that they have an ideological axe to grind. 5 It may vary, but it is there. 6 We are simply not allowed that. We do not -- we 7 have to make a very clear distinction between what is 8 news and what is opinion. In the newspaper, I would say 9 that this is an extremely blurred area. Very often, you 10 see news stories that you have yourself covered which 11 bear almost no relation to what you have experienced in 12 that story because the thing has been given a very 13 specific slant to fit with the ideological outlook of 14 the paper. 15 Q. Right. We have heard from witnesses this morning on the 16 same subject, the blurring of the line between news and 17 comment. Is this a concern in your view, and if so, why 18 is it a concern? 19 A. Well, you know, what is truth, asked Pontius Pilate, and 20 that is a pretty big question. If truth is something 21 which is supported by the facts, then it seems to me 22 that we have some building blocks towards reporting 23 a good story and a story that is true. I think if the 24 building blocks are interfered with by cement that is in 25 some way contaminated with a view into which these Page 6</p>	<p>1 the United States for a period of time is that there it 2 is much clearer. The New York Times and Washington Post 3 are very clear as to what is opinion and what is news, 4 and although you can argue that they may have mild 5 ideological affiliations, generally speaking, I think 6 you get a clearer account of what is going on. 7 Q. Do you mean signposting in the sense that each page 8 would have, at the top of it, whether or not news or 9 comment appears on that page or do you mean in 10 a headline it should be made clear, or does it not 11 matter? 12 A. No, I think you can only compartmentalise it, as you 13 suggest, with a heading at the top of the page, which 14 suggests opinion is on there. Some of the broadsheets 15 do that perfectly happily and it is very clear that 16 opinion pages are either sort of in the middle of the 17 paper or in the front or the back, but it is where the 18 front page is, in the end, part opinion and then I think 19 that is difficult, because the headline is big and the 20 opinion is strong and the news is weak. 21 Q. All right. Could this signposting solution concept be 22 applied right across the press, do you think, right 23 through from broadsheets to tabloid press? 24 A. I don't really see why not. I mean -- and I am not sure 25 there is a hunger for opinionated news, to be honest. Page 8</p>

<p>1 I am not sure people are any better off by having their 2 own prejudices fulfilled by the paper. Maybe that is 3 what sells papers. I am not -- I have written lots of 4 articles for papers, but I don't think I have ever 5 written an opinionated article. I have written an 6 opinion for papers and I have written a new story for 7 papers, but I don't think I've ever written an 8 opinionated news story for papers. There is a big 9 distinction. 10 Q. What about the argument that newspapers are essentially 11 having to compete in an increasingly competitive field? 12 They have to compete with broadcasters, increasingly the 13 Internet, social networking sites, and by providing 14 opinion in this way, they are actually trying to create 15 a niche for themselves, which is the only way they can 16 be survive. Is there any merit in that argument? 17 A. We're all looking for an identity of one sort of 18 another, and opinion may well help shape that identity 19 but, you know, at the end of the day, it seems to me 20 that you are looking at press standards and it seems to 21 me one of the standards that has slipped is the 22 distinction between fact and opinion, and I think that 23 that is an important and clear distinction, and one that 24 it would be possible to address in a regulatory form. 25 Q. Right. Can I ask you now, please, about paragraph 2(c) Page 9</p>	<p>1 Q. All right. Insofar as you have not become socially 2 friendly with other politicians, is that a moral or 3 ethical decision or simply something that has arisen? 4 A. I think it is natural accretion. That is how it works. 5 I can't honestly say that I lie awake at night longing 6 for another social engagement with a politician. 7 Q. Can I ask you to turn now to (g) of your statement. It 8 is at the top of the third page. This is discussing the 9 rise of 24-hour television news, together with the 10 development of internet and social networking. You 11 explain: 12 "This has undoubtedly impacted on what we once 13 understood as news." 14 I note that you yourself are a Twitter user and 15 blogger as well. How do you consider yourself to be 16 regulated in those spheres, if at all? 17 A. Well, I mean, technically, legally, we are not regulated 18 in those spheres, but we have an understanding certainly 19 in my place of employment, that in a moral sense and in 20 a sort of quasi-legal sense, we are governed by the same 21 regulation as Ofcom metes out to us in a television 22 context, that all the platforms upon which we work we 23 work essentially to an Ofcom guideline. 24 But that is something we have established together 25 in the workplace with our editors. I would say that the Page 11</p>
<p>1 of your statement. You explain that over the years -- 2 this is about interaction between politicians and 3 members of the media and here you are discussing your 4 own contact. You explain that over the years, you have 5 regularly intersected with politicians and public 6 officials over the years but you would guess that you 7 have known fewer than half a dozen Cabinet ministers 8 socially and then on entirely appropriate terms. That 9 begs the question: what are "entirely appropriate 10 terms"? 11 A. Well, I mean, you intersect with people socially 12 because, as social animal, as you have something 13 socially in common. But simply because you are a hack 14 and they are a politician, that I don't think is 15 necessarily going to produce what I would call 16 an appropriate social engagement. I mean, we are 17 talking about a period of over three decades and I would 18 think it would not be more than three or four 19 politicians I have ever come to know particularly well. 20 In one case, for example, I could -- by chance, I met 21 a senior politician on holiday, and his wife painted and 22 I paint and so we painted together, and that is where 23 the friendship came from. So I call that entirely 24 appropriate. That wasn't because I work on 25 Channel 4 News and she is married to a Cabinet minister. Page 10</p>	<p>1 Twitter and the social network aspect is more elastic, 2 and they are more generous to us in those circumstances. 3 We are a little more permissive. But I would say that 4 we still -- you know, we have to remember that that is 5 who we are. We are essentially impartial operatives and 6 we can't get out into a huge amount of opinion on that 7 platform. 8 Q. Is that because you blog and tweet as "Jon Snow, 9 presenter of Channel 4 News"; would it be any different 10 if you were tweeting or blogging as Jon Snow, also 11 a private individual? 12 A. Well, I do in fact blog and tweet as "Jon Snow, 13 Channel 4 News" and I don't have any other outlet, nor 14 would I, I think, seek to have one. Once you are in a 15 position like this, it is difficult to say one has 16 nothing to do with the other. The one can pollute the 17 other. 18 Q. Is there anything you would like to say, Mr Snow, about 19 regulation of these particular spheres, the blogosphere, 20 social networking and so on; is there anything you would 21 like to add on this thorny question? 22 A. I think one could say a lot, but the horse has bolted, 23 it seems to me. I don't see actually that there is much 24 that can be done -- and this, in a way, is a huge 25 challenge to the Inquiry, I suspect, in that it is one Page 12</p>

<p>1 thing to talk about regulation and the newspapers; well, 2 in 10 years, there probably won't be any newspapers. 3 They will exist on other platforms. Then you would be 4 getting into a very confused area. I think it is going 5 to be very, very difficult to regulate the web, and I am 6 not sure how it can be done. 7 We have done it this way. We have done it by an 8 understanding. But it wouldn't hold water in a court, 9 I suppose. 10 Q. I think the answer to my question is "no"? 11 A. "No" is the answer. Sorry, I was a bit verbose. 12 Q. Not at all. I don't think anyone has come up with 13 a magic solution, in any event. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you. 15 A. I am sorry. 16 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Turning to paragraph 2(h) of your witness 17 statement, please. You explain that in your 18 experience -- I will pass over how long that experience 19 is -- the relationship between Number 10, the 20 government, public bodies and the media has become 21 rather more stage-managed. You explain that access to 22 ministers and public officials has become more tightly 23 controlled. You also explain that in your own 24 experience when you were able to interview politicians 25 in the studio or for a report or even on a doorstep,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 13</p>	<p>1 a lot of activities which are beyond the real need. 2 But on the other hand, it is probably better that 3 way than the other way, but ... 4 Yes. For example, last year I made a documentary 5 about dodgy doctors and some element of the compliance 6 to do with phraseology and various other things had not 7 apparently been quite right. As a result, we had to 8 reshoot several days of material and that is tough when 9 you have a heavy work schedule and the rest of it. You 10 build in the blocks to do your stuff and then -- so it 11 is there, it is very much there, and it would be wrong 12 to suggest that you could come up with a regulatory 13 system which was as detailed as Ofcom and not think it 14 would affect the working practices of every journalist. 15 Q. Is that complaint about the fact that you had to go 16 ahead and shoot various bits of it again or did the 17 regime stop you from putting out the documentary that 18 you wanted? 19 A. No, if you want to put the documentary badly enough, you 20 will eventually put it out, though it may be a bit of 21 a shadow of what you originally wanted to put out. 22 I think in this case it seemed to me to be such a small 23 issue that it wasn't really worth burbling about. It 24 never stops you doing the story but it might stop you 25 doing it in a certain way. That may indeed be the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 15</p>
<p>1 their willingness to communicate tends to be either 2 because they want to promote a line or the politician or 3 the party is making a rapid effort to shut down or 4 reorientate a troublesome story. 5 You then go on to discuss Ofcom in this regard. You 6 say you have had concerns about Ofcom being a little 7 Draconian on compliance in news and current affairs. 8 Can you expand a little on that? It is just below that, 9 paragraph 2(h), just below where I have been reading 10 them. 11 A. Sorry, what exactly ... 12 Q. You say this. You say: 13 "I have had concerns that Ofcom could be a little 14 Draconian on compliance in news and current affairs." 15 Although obviously you say -- 16 A. I work in both news and current affairs. 17 Q. Yes. 18 A. And make documentaries sort of from time to time. 19 Q. Yes. 20 A. And the compliance, particularly in documentaries, is 21 very, very burdensome indeed. It doesn't stop you doing 22 what you want to do but you have to dot an awful lot of 23 Is and cross a lot of Ts. I could possibly argue that 24 whilst I admire Ofcom system, I think the compliance 25 stuff has gone too far and that we have to carry out</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 14</p>	<p>1 design of some regulation. Who knows? 2 Q. Can I ask you to go to section 5 of paragraph 5, the 3 fourth page of your statement. This is about elections. 4 Just to draw the contrast, please. We have heard a lot 5 about the role of newspapers in elections. You give us 6 the other side of the coin from the broadcaster's point 7 of view. Can you just tell us, please, why you consider 8 this to be one of the most carefully managed and 9 regulated aspects of your job? 10 A. Well, until the event of the Internet, clearly General 11 Elections were very ferociously fought in my working 12 lifetime on television. Television was the main 13 platform. Although minds are often made up by the 14 written press, the information and the colour of an 15 election campaign and very often many of the messages 16 were transmitted on television. Television was seen as 17 an increasingly powerful element. Therefore the 18 obligation on television to get it right, certainly on 19 public television, was very, very strong indeed. 20 I would say that it is the area of our work that 21 probably has the most careful scrutiny when it comes to 22 compliance and to balance, and you are under very 23 considerable balance circumstance. You have to give 24 opposing parties equal access to time, so if you do, one 25 night, a big investigation into some party policy with</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 16</p>

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<p>1 one party, you must visit the other party either within 2 24 hours or even within the same programme. 3 Q. Again, does this aspect of the regulatory regime, in 4 your view, hinder you in accurately or fairly reporting 5 the issues that you have to report on? 6 A. There is a present debate going on about whether general 7 elections can be made more exciting and it could be 8 argued they are made less exciting by the degree of 9 regulation that we have to go in for. On the other 10 hand, if the choice is between BBC 10 o'clock and 11 Fox News, I think most people in Britain would rather go 12 for the BBC 10 o'clock news, simply because Fox News has 13 become a major player in the very contest in which they 14 are supposed to be reporting. And that is where we can 15 go, if we want. If we want to get rid of regulation, 16 that is where we will end up. 17 Q. Turning to paragraph 6 of your statement, please. This 18 is discussing the history of relations between 19 politicians and the media. You say that like many 20 others, you have been astonished by what we have been 21 learning about the relationships of some parts of the 22 media with politicians and public officials. Having 23 listened to this Inquiry, what is it in particular that 24 you have been astonished to hear? 25 A. Well, I have actually -- I think I should have added the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 17</p>	<p>1 that my channel paid Monica Lewinsky to give me the 2 first interview she gave after the shenanigans with Bill 3 Clinton. But I see that really as almost -- that is 4 different. I think the idea that you are paying 5 somebody who is actually paid to get on with a job of 6 work to give you information about that work is -- or to 7 give you access to material that they are able to access 8 through their work is totally unacceptable. 9 Q. So that is payments? 10 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I think we have to add, of course, 11 that that is an allegation and we will have to wait and 12 see -- 13 A. Of course, I mention no names. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: We will have to see what happens at 15 the conclusion of the investigation. 16 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Absolutely. 17 You alluded to the comings and goings of individuals 18 at 10 Downing Street -- 19 A. I mean, we can be very clear that we were very well 20 aware of Rupert Murdoch's movements, either at the back 21 of the premises or the front. They tended to veer from 22 one to the other. Not always, but sometimes. And that 23 should have raised a little bit of an alarm bell. 24 Q. What is it about what you have heard that has astonished 25 you about the access or level of access?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 19</p>
<p>1 word "guilty" as well, because I think we suspected that 2 this was going on, that the access was as has been 3 described. There were a few moments when one would be 4 staking out Downing Street and you would be aware of the 5 comings and goings of some of the individuals who have 6 figured in this inquiry. I don't think we ever really 7 asked many questions about what they were doing there 8 and I don't really know why we didn't. I think in some 9 cases we didn't because we thought it might actually be 10 slightly visited upon us. Sometimes if you go nosing 11 around what newspapers are doing, it ends up in some 12 degree of trouble. 13 But I think -- I have been shocked at payments. 14 I mean, I find payments to public officials beyond 15 anything I can imagine. I mean, I have been taking 16 officials or anybody else that I have needed to get to 17 know for a cop of coffee or whatever, but we have never 18 gone to the Ritz or Claridges or -- it just wouldn't 19 cross your mind, and the idea that you would pay 20 somebody for information in that way is not something 21 which has ever crossed my -- again, I can't think of 22 a story I have ever been on when -- you might have 23 a victim of some crime or something who will only speak 24 if they are paid and then there is an issue as to 25 whether anybody is going to do that, and I will admit</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 18</p>	<p>1 A. Well, I mean some of it is allegation, isn't it? So one 2 has to be careful. 3 Q. Yes. 4 A. I am shocked that there is the strong allegation that 5 there was an attempt to change legislation affecting the 6 commercial interests of a broadcaster -- that would seem 7 to me to be amazing -- in reward for -- in return for 8 support for a particular election campaign. Those sort 9 of things. You know, we used to laugh up our sleeves 10 and say that is what the Italians did. Now we've 11 discovered we do it. It is amazing. I am astonished. 12 One can be cynical as a journalist and say they are at 13 it all the time, but actually I never did think they 14 were at it. I didn't think we were a particularly 15 corrupt society. I have always worked on the basis that 16 there was something a bit better. 17 Q. Is there anything you would like to say about the future 18 of the relationship between senior -- either editors or 19 proprietors and journalists, given what you have heard, 20 the evidence you have heard at this inquiry? 21 A. I think as the competition gets fiercer and the terrain 22 changes, it is going to get worse. I think money is now 23 on such a scale -- I mean, some of the commercial 24 interests are so big and the need is so great for 25 bandwidth, for licence, for access -- I think it will</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 20</p>

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1 get worse. I don't see -- you know, this wasn't -- when
 2 I started, we had four channels of television, and they
 3 were all publicly owned. So now we are in an arena,
 4 only two decades later, where there are thousands of
 5 channels, massive corporate interests, and the poor old
 6 politician, civil servant, whatever, is still having the
 7 vineyard and they want to come in and splash a bit of
 8 stuff about. I think it will get worse.
 9 Q. Is there anything that can be done to ensure a level of
 10 ethical behaviour? Is there anything that you would
 11 point to as being something that could help achieve
 12 a solution?
 13 A. Access and transparency.
 14 Q. Right.
 15 A. Access is increasingly controlled and reluctant, I would
 16 say.
 17 Q. Mm-hm.
 18 A. I am very conscious that the indepth news programmes
 19 have a greater difficulty attracting a major ministerial
 20 interview than the soundbite on the 24-hour television
 21 outlet. If you can get away with coming out of your
 22 ministry and saying, "It was all right when I last saw
 23 it", rather than having to sit down and have a long
 24 discussion about what happened and the rest of it, then
 25 you are going to go for the former.

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1 I don't see -- that is not really a matter of
 2 regulation. It is a matter of reality.
 3 Q. All right. Okay. Can I ask you now to move on to
 4 paragraph 7 of your statement. You explain -- and
 5 I think you have in oral evidence as well -- that there
 6 is a difference between the press and other media, and
 7 regulation has contributed, of course, to that
 8 difference. You simply say that you don't believe that
 9 the newspapers can be subjected to an Ofcom-style
 10 regulation, and with the growth of the Internet, in any
 11 event the horse has bolted.
 12 Is there anything else you want to say about why you
 13 think the Ofcom model could not be used?
 14 A. Well, the Ofcom model rests on the reality that the
 15 government owns the bandwidth and the other broadcasting
 16 paraphernalia that enable us to get to air.
 17 Q. Yes.
 18 A. And therefore you can be licensed --
 19 Q. Yes.
 20 A. -- to have access to these bands. A newspaper needs no
 21 such licence to do anything --
 22 Q. No.
 23 A. -- and nor should they have it. If we are going to have
 24 a free press, freedom of speech, then it is healthy that
 25 anyone can spring up and run some kind of a news sheet.

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1 That must be the fundamental difference. There is no
 2 stranglehold of that nature.
 3 Q. All right. You then go on at paragraph 8 to discuss
 4 what a new regulatory system for the press would need to
 5 look like. You explain certain elements of it. It
 6 needs to be impartial. You said right at the start of
 7 your evidence that one of the things it needed to be was
 8 that editors should not be allowed to sit in judgment on
 9 other editors, and so on. Is there anything you would
 10 like to -- can you set out for us the elements that you
 11 would consider needed to be changed?
 12 A. I don't think I have anything that hasn't already been
 13 said here before, but I do think it needs to be
 14 independent, independent of government and independent
 15 of the press. But I think inevitably it would need to
 16 draw on some experience of the press somewhere within it
 17 but that that experience should be outnumbered by people
 18 whose main mission in life has not been the press. They
 19 should not be sitting in judgment on themselves.
 20 Q. Okay.
 21 A. But above and beyond anything else, it seems to me that
 22 it is what this regulator has to do, and I think the
 23 regulator needs to be pro-active, it needs to be
 24 prepared to say, "Oi" when they see some indiscretion
 25 going on or some foul play.

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1 Q. Can I ask you to pause there. Do you mean by that that
 2 it should have the power to go in and enquire after
 3 a story even if no complaint has been made?
 4 A. Yes. I think it should be about maintaining standards,
 5 as much as anything else, and integrity. And if, for
 6 example, there has been some glaring failure, it would
 7 be interesting to know why. Even if it is
 8 a relatively -- I think that it would do editors no harm
 9 to know that they were going to be questioned about what
 10 they had done.
 11 Q. Right. You then say at the bottom of that paragraph
 12 that there have been some improvements in recent years.
 13 Readers' editors you are a fan of and daily corrections
 14 columns:
 15 "But [you say] material that has been proven plain
 16 wrong has not been matched by a similar size of apology
 17 and rectification."
 18 Can you tell us a little more about that?
 19 A. Well, readers' editors have been around in the United
 20 States for some time. They have been here now for
 21 several years. Several broadsheets have readers'
 22 editors. I would like to see tabloids have readers'
 23 editors where the views of the readers are represented
 24 and where -- it is not the letters column. This is
 25 somebody saying, you know, would you please correct

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<p>1 something or whatever.</p> <p>2 But also the corrections column has been absolutely</p> <p>3 standard practice in the Washington Post, for example,</p> <p>4 for at least two decades. And I don't see -- what does</p> <p>5 a newspaper have to lose if it simply has a column</p> <p>6 saying, "By the way, we called Mrs X Mrs Y; she is in</p> <p>7 fact Mrs Q" or whatever? There are ways in which you</p> <p>8 can perfectly easily -- one paragraph, you correct the</p> <p>9 things that are wrong. The date, whatever it is. Some</p> <p>10 of these things are relatively small, some are quite</p> <p>11 big.</p> <p>12 When it comes to apology, I mean, obviously on the</p> <p>13 basis of gravity of offence, apologies should be</p> <p>14 commensurate with the scale of what was got wrong in the</p> <p>15 first place, and I think that that would be a fantastic</p> <p>16 pressure on editors to get things right.</p> <p>17 If you knew you were in fact possibly going to have</p> <p>18 to run a front page in which the typeface was going to</p> <p>19 be as bold as the original assertion, you would think</p> <p>20 twice about whether you were going to risk it, because</p> <p>21 you are just going to look an idiot.</p> <p>22 Q. So by prominence, you mean located in the place and</p> <p>23 given the same --</p> <p>24 A. If the offence is bad enough, yes. I mean, I think</p> <p>25 there is no problem with that at all. I am not saying</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 25</p>	<p>1 human beings. Let's admit it. There is no exceptional</p> <p>2 about an editor. Editors are human beings. They can</p> <p>3 apologise.</p> <p>4 Q. How important is this idea of a photograph --</p> <p>5 I understand that your main view would be if there has</p> <p>6 to be an apology, it should be given the same prominence</p> <p>7 as the article which led to the apology. In the</p> <p>8 alternative, what is in this idea of a photograph to</p> <p>9 draw attention to a particular --</p> <p>10 A. The whole idea of apology is to hide it, is to keep it</p> <p>11 as low key as possible. In my case, it was on page 2.</p> <p>12 I didn't know, but page 2 of a tabloid is the least read</p> <p>13 page. There will be people here who will confirm that</p> <p>14 that's not true, but I think it is true. Page 3 is the</p> <p>15 one you look at, not because Murdoch has made it a sort</p> <p>16 of nude job but because that is where your eye falls,</p> <p>17 and so if you can get the apology out on page 2 and</p> <p>18 little and preferably without anything which defines it</p> <p>19 as anything more than just a couple of columns of boring</p> <p>20 print, you are in business.</p> <p>21 So in case, right up to publication moment, the</p> <p>22 issue is: would we allow a less than passport photograph</p> <p>23 of me to go at the top of the column or not? And they</p> <p>24 said no and we said yes, and in the end, they caved in</p> <p>25 and this vast concession was made to put a photograph at</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 27</p>
<p>1 that would happen every time but there would be varying</p> <p>2 degrees of it. But as somebody who has been apologised</p> <p>3 to by a tabloid, the original offence spread over five</p> <p>4 pages. The confession was that it was completely untrue</p> <p>5 and they accepted it was untrue and they retracted it</p> <p>6 and apologised. The apology was 1.5 inches by a column,</p> <p>7 and then the wrestling was over whether there should be</p> <p>8 a photograph of me above it. They didn't want</p> <p>9 the photograph because that would draw attention to the</p> <p>10 apology. Actually, in the end, we got the photograph,</p> <p>11 but I mean, this is pathetic. Wrestling over 1.5 inches</p> <p>12 when you have had five pages of something which the</p> <p>13 paper itself deems untrue? That is not the way forward.</p> <p>14 The way forward has to be that people -- that</p> <p>15 a newspaper suffers when it gets things wrong. We</p> <p>16 suffer when we get things wrong. We have to correct</p> <p>17 them. We have no choice but to correct it if it is</p> <p>18 wrong. We will often, if we can, apologise in the</p> <p>19 programme. I am afraid I have had to make far more</p> <p>20 apologies than I care to admit, but they tend to come at</p> <p>21 the end of the programme: "I'm very sorry to have to say</p> <p>22 that when we reported X at 7.10 tonight, actually we had</p> <p>23 a mistake there, and it was X, Y, Z", whatever. You</p> <p>24 know, it is standard practice and right.</p> <p>25 What is so shameful about being wrong? We are all</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 26</p>	<p>1 the top of the apology, which, as I say, extended for</p> <p>2 1.5 inches. That is the process we have at the moment.</p> <p>3 That is justice; that is the way any reader who -- or</p> <p>4 any person offended by a paper who has something wrong</p> <p>5 gets redress.</p> <p>6 Q. So we have discussed independence from government, from</p> <p>7 the press, pro-active powers, prominence of apologies.</p> <p>8 Is there anything else about the future of press</p> <p>9 regulation that you would like to draw attention to or</p> <p>10 to discuss?</p> <p>11 A. No. I mean, I have fully recognised that you have</p> <p>12 a terrible challenge. It is very difficult to protect</p> <p>13 free speech, not engage the statutory legal system and</p> <p>14 all the rest of it, and yet have a fully credible</p> <p>15 independent regulatory system. But I am absolutely</p> <p>16 convinced that newspapers will be better for regulation</p> <p>17 than they are now and nobody can pretend that what they</p> <p>18 have had is any real sort of regulation.</p> <p>19 Q. Can I ask you to look, towards the end of your</p> <p>20 statement, at the final paragraph under section 10. It</p> <p>21 is at the bottom of page 5 of this statement. You say</p> <p>22 that you believe in general electronic media have had</p> <p>23 less access to politicians precisely because you are</p> <p>24 seen by many of them as less malleable. You say this:</p> <p>25 "I do criticise the popular written press for the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 28</p>

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<p>1 low regard with which people in public life are held and 2 for the obsession of prying into the private lives of 3 both ordinary and extraordinary citizens. Indeed, I go 4 further: I believe the constant undermining of people in 5 public life may deter many from entering it." 6 Let me ask you two questions about that. The first 7 is the last sentiment in that paragraph, about deterring 8 people from entering it. Do you mean across public life 9 or are you talking about politicians there? 10 A. No, I think that in all sorts of areas of public life -- 11 and it's not just politicians; it could be in terms of 12 other public roles -- people are very often reluctant to 13 get involved because they don't want to be part of this 14 public fray. I do believe that some newspapers have an 15 agenda for undermining or destroying people who don't 16 fit with their particular interests, be they commercial 17 or ideological, and that the -- I mean, you can see it 18 in as simple a thing as the appointment of the manager 19 of the England football team. It is very clear that one 20 or two elements of the press didn't like the appointment 21 and lampooned him and sent him up, you know, ruthlessly, 22 played with the fact that he couldn't roll his Rs. This 23 is pointless, absolutely pointless. Whole vast 24 headlines on the front page of the paper. How does that 25 encourage people to want to make the extra effort in <p style="text-align: center;">Page 29</p> </p>	<p>1 becomes a very big and destructive thing. 2 I believe one of the problems about the environment 3 in which this inquiry is set is that there has been 4 enormous emphasis on the Murdoch papers, on 5 News International, and possibly not enough on other 6 areas of the press. I would say that Associated 7 Newspapers are at least, if not more pernicious than 8 anything you see in the News International stable. They 9 are vying with each other, perhaps, but there is 10 something more insidious about Associated Newspapers and 11 very possibly they will go after me for saying so. But 12 I believe they have an agenda for trying to undermine or 13 wreck the careers of individual people in public life, 14 and I think that is unhealthy. I think people should 15 stand or fall by what they achieve or fail to achieve in 16 the job they are employed to do. It is of no interest 17 that they have -- unless it is in some way in conflict 18 with their actual responsibility. But if it was found 19 that the a Archbishop of Canterbury was -- and God rest 20 our souls that he would never be found here, but just 21 supposing he was frequenting Soho or something. That 22 would obviously have some clear public interest. 23 But I'm afraid to say this goes way beyond anything 24 like that, where people who have a quite modest, 25 perhaps, role in public life are undermined. It is part <p style="text-align: center;">Page 31</p> </p>
<p>1 public life? He is not a politician; he is an England 2 football manager. 3 Q. You have probably covered my second question. You say 4 you criticise the popular written press for obsessional 5 prying into the private lives of both ordinary and 6 extraordinary citizens. Can you give us a bit more 7 detail about why you take that view? Again, do you 8 limit this to any particular newspapers? Is there any 9 particular modus operandi that you would criticise? 10 A. I think two things here. One, if you are a journalist, 11 you are exposed to other people's journalism across the 12 world and I don't think that there is -- on this scale, 13 I don't think we have this manifest in any other system. 14 People point to Bild in Germany, with is a tabloid, but 15 frankly it is mild by comparison with what goes on here. 16 France, of course, there are none, but that is partly 17 because there is a Privacy Act. United States, the 18 National Inquirer is sold in a different part of the 19 shop. I mean, it is not seen as true. I mean, it is 20 good fun, but -- you know, it is crazy. 21 Here, it is part of the newspaper. This is news. 22 It is on the same scale as the liberation of Tahrir 23 Square and the arrival of a Muslim brotherhood president 24 and all the rest of it. That gets the same treatment as 25 Mr and Mrs or Ms X and their private life, and so it <p style="text-align: center;">Page 30</p> </p>	<p>1 of the fare, it is part of the staple diet, and I don't 2 think it is a diet actually that people really need 3 even. 4 It is not a question of suppressing press freedom; 5 it's just: why don't we deal with the important things 6 in life? And, you know, it is not -- it is, as I say, 7 pernicious and I think at times mendacious. I don't -- 8 I try to analyse it a lot. I try to see what it is that 9 makes this worthwhile. Where does it come from? What 10 role does the editor at Associated Newspapers have in 11 this? You have heard the atmosphere there can be quite 12 difficult and I know -- and it is something I really 13 want to say to you, is that Fleet Street, as we still 14 call it, even though it is nowhere near Fleet Street, is 15 populated by really decent, good, wonderful journalists. 16 No question. Every single paper I have ever had any 17 contact with on Fleet Street has superb people working 18 for it. But somehow this culture sweeps through and is 19 allowed to prevail, irrespective of the quality of the 20 people who try to work there. And it doesn't happen in 21 broadcasting, and it is not just because we are 22 regulated. It is because we don't see it as any part of 23 our news function. 24 For example, in the chitty chatty days before 25 Diana's demise, we took it as sort of <p style="text-align: center;">Page 32</p> </p>

<p>1 almost self-denying ordnance. We said, "Look, who she 2 is dating, what she is doing is not really our business. 3 If some news development occurs, there is some mêlée or 4 something and she is in danger, then we will report it, 5 but fundamentally her private life is not an issue for 6 this programme." 7 Then, of course, she died, and she became a massive 8 interest and we had to talk about people we had never 9 talked about before, somebody called Dodi Al Fayed, 10 et cetera. These people had to be resurrected. 11 But in my view, this is the great need, is for this 12 area either to be divorced from our understanding of 13 news and placed somewhere else, maybe in a brown paper 14 bag under the shelf, but for it to appear as being 15 mainstream news is incredibly destructive. I think 16 people get a distorted a view of the world in which we 17 all function. 18 After all, Britain is made up mainly by people who 19 live by the law, do their best -- politicians, workers, 20 people in the health service. These are the people who 21 make this country work and simply demonising them, 22 exposing them for some human frailty, is, I think, very 23 destructive. 24 Q. Mr Snow, thank you very much. Those are all my 25 questions. The judge obviously may have some questions.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 33</p>	<p>1 expectation over the last week, I have no intention of 2 asking you any questions about the article in the Mail 3 on Sunday of 17 June, but there is some nonsense I would 4 like to deal with, if you don't mind. 5 It is a suggestion that I specifically called you to 6 ask about the article. That has been said by many 7 people. Would you agree that must be absolute rubbish? 8 A. That is not the case, sir. 9 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Because, just so we have elaborated 10 it, you received a section 21 notice, I think on 11 5 April. On 23 April, you provided a response in 12 a statement which, as you have just confirmed, is dated 13 20 April. 14 A. (Witness nods) 15 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Then on 29 May, your solicitors were 16 informed by email that the Inquiry wanted you to give 17 oral evidence today. 18 A. That's correct. 19 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: And on 31 May, you agreed to do that. 20 A. That's correct, sir. 21 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: And that is all before 13 June. 22 A. Yes. 23 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: And anybody wanting to research the 24 article that they wish to write about how I was going to 25 call you specifically to deal with this article could</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 35</p>
<p>1 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: No, Mr Snow, thank you very much. 2 That is very powerful. Thank you. 3 A. Thank you, sir. 4 (The witness withdrew from the witness box) 5 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: I don't know whether you wanted to take 6 an early break before the next witness or whether ... 7 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: We will take a break now and then 8 come back. Thank you. 9 (3.00 pm) 10 (A short break) 11 (3.05 pm) 12 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Sir, the second witness this afternoon is 13 Mr Simon Walters. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you. 15 MR SIMON DAVID CHARLES WALTERS (sworn) 16 Questions by MS PATRY HOSKINS 17 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Please take a seat, Mr Walters. Make 18 yourself comfortable. Can you give the Inquiry your 19 full name, please. 20 A. Simon David Charles Walters. 21 Q. You have provided us with a written statement dated 22 20 April 2012. Can you confirm, please, that that is 23 your formal evidence to this inquiry? 24 A. Yes, it is. 25 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Mr Walters, contrary to everybody's</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 34</p>	<p>1 easily have found those facts out by asking you, 2 couldn't they? 3 A. They could have done. 4 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Thank you very much. 5 Now, can we just touch upon, please, your career 6 history, first of all. This is set out at paragraph 1 7 of your statement. I will summarise it. You have been 8 a journalist, you tell us, since 1974. You have also 9 worked at the Sunday newspaper. You explain you joined 10 the lobby in 1983 with the Sun; what role did you hold 11 there? 12 A. I was lobby correspondent on the Sun. 13 Q. You tell us you have also been political editor and 14 deputy editor of the Sunday Express but that you have 15 now been the political editor of the Mail on Sunday 16 since 1999? 17 A. That's correct. 18 Q. Have I accurately summarised the position? 19 A. Yes, you have. 20 Q. Thank you. Again, given your extensive experience, can 21 we start with the way the relationship between 22 politicians and journalists has changed over the years 23 you have been in political journalism, please. You deal 24 with this topic at paragraph 7 onwards of your 25 statement. You deal with a number of changes: first,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 36</p>

<p>1 greater transparency over the years; secondly, changes 2 to Downing Street lobby briefings. You also look at the 3 changes to the role of press officers and the new use of 4 spin doctors and so on.</p> <p>5 I am going to take you through those in a little 6 detail, if I can, the first of which is transparency, 7 greater transparency. At paragraph 8, you explain that 8 in essence, in the past, politicians were more likely to 9 be viewed as members of the ruling class and the media 10 was expected to know its place, but now the public 11 expect more openness and newspapers have developed 12 a similar approach in response, yes?</p> <p>13 A. Yes.</p> <p>14 Q. Others have said, Mr Walters, that in fact this new 15 approach has now gone too far to the other extreme. The 16 politicians are now regarded with what some would say 17 deep cynicism and hostility and it has also been said by 18 witnesses today, in fact, that this approach of 19 newspapers can in some situations actually put people 20 off going into politics; is there any validity in those 21 assertions, in your view?</p> <p>22 A. I don't think there is any shortage of people putting 23 themselves forward to be Members of Parliament and it is 24 true that there is a greater degree of transparency 25 these days but I think that's a good and healthy thing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 37</p>	<p>1 on the way the public sees politicians but I am not sure 2 it has changed greatly in other degrees, no.</p> <p>3 Q. All right, then perhaps I can put the question in this 4 way: do you think that newspapers -- I am not asking you 5 to comment on your particular newspaper at this stage -- 6 have gone too far in looking into and exposing the 7 private lives of politicians, or is the balance right?</p> <p>8 A. Well, you would have to give me examples of that. But, 9 I mean -- I am sure newspapers make mistakes on occasion 10 but I think by and large, I think the public has a right 11 to know, broadly speaking, what politicians are doing 12 and I think that kind of reporting can be justified in 13 many cases. But you would need to give me specific 14 examples.</p> <p>15 Q. I deliberately asked you the question as a general 16 question. As a matter of general perception, do you 17 perceive that newspapers have gone too far or do you 18 think in general terms the balance is about right?</p> <p>19 A. In general terms, I think the balance is about right.</p> <p>20 Q. Okay. So where would you draw the line in respect of 21 the public interest when deciding whether or not 22 a politician's personal life is something that should be 23 the subject of a particular article or story?</p> <p>24 A. Well, my editor would make that decision.</p> <p>25 Q. Of course.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 39</p>
<p>1 in the main.</p> <p>2 Q. Let's just deal with them in turn. The first 3 proposition I put to you is that politicians are now 4 regarded in some quarters with deep cynicism and 5 hostility; would you agree that there is any validity in 6 that particular view?</p> <p>7 A. I think there probably is but I think that's more to do 8 with the expenses affair than anything else that's 9 happened in the press. Clearly, that did have a major 10 effect on public opinion. Aside from that, has the 11 public's view of politicians changed greatly over the 12 years? Probably not massively, no. I think they have 13 probably always been fairly sceptical about politicians.</p> <p>14 Q. The second aspect I asked you about is whether this put 15 people off going into politics. You have told us that 16 you don't think there is any shortage of people wanting 17 to go into politics, but can you see the argument that 18 if politicians and, in particular, their private lives 19 are scrutinised carefully, that might put off some 20 people from going into politics? Can you see that 21 argument?</p> <p>22 A. Well, I don't know whether it has or hasn't, but there 23 are lots of people willing to be Members of Parliament 24 and I am not sure I would go along with that argument. 25 As I say, I think the expenses affair had a big effect</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 38</p>	<p>1 A. But I think broadly speaking you would have to bear in 2 mind whether it had any bearing on their fitness for 3 public office, generally speaking. That would be the 4 general rule. But each case you would have to decide on 5 its merits.</p> <p>6 Q. All right. So the public interest would lie in whether 7 or not the exposure of the particular personal issue had 8 any bearing on their public role?</p> <p>9 A. Well, if, for example, a politician had proclaimed that 10 they were a family man or a family woman and then you 11 found out that the opposite was the case, then I think 12 clearly that would be a legitimate matter to report.</p> <p>13 Q. But someone who had never made any such public 14 proclamation would be immune from that kind of story?</p> <p>15 A. I think you would have to judge each case on its merits.</p> <p>16 Q. Okay, all right. I'm just trying to understand the 17 principles you would apply. All right. Before I turn 18 to the second change that you have identified in the 19 years that you have been in political journalism, can we 20 look at another change that someone else has identified. 21 That is this argument about the blurring between news 22 and comment. You probably heard Mr Snow give evidence 23 a moment ago about that.</p> <p>24 A. Mm-hm.</p> <p>25 Q. Others have said that newspapers have done this, have</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 40</p>

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<p>1 blurred the line between news and comment, because it is</p> <p>2 in increasing competition with others, ie newspapers</p> <p>3 have to perform a different role in order to survive,</p> <p>4 essentially, and this is what they do; they provide more</p> <p>5 opinion, blurred in with the news that they are</p> <p>6 reporting.</p> <p>7 A. Mm-hm.</p> <p>8 Q. Now, let's consider it in this way. First of all, do</p> <p>9 you accept that over the years you have been</p> <p>10 a journalist, there has been an increasing blurring of</p> <p>11 the line between straight news and comment.</p> <p>12 A. Well, I am not sure I do. I can only talk from my</p> <p>13 personal experience.</p> <p>14 Q. Of course.</p> <p>15 A. I mean, I became a general news reporter when I first</p> <p>16 entered journalism after leaving school and I continue</p> <p>17 to regard myself as a news reporter. My specialism is</p> <p>18 politics but it could be any other, and I am not sure</p> <p>19 that I have ever written an opinion column. In fact, in</p> <p>20 the Mail on Sunday, we more or less had a -- I have not</p> <p>21 written any political opinion pieces. I stick to</p> <p>22 political reporting of news stories. I approach all</p> <p>23 news stories in exactly the same way: attempt to find</p> <p>24 out the facts, go to each side or all relevant parties,</p> <p>25 and to quote all sides of the story. So I regard myself</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 41</p>	<p>1 a story about it, and a narrative. At times, if you</p> <p>2 were simply to report what people had said and the</p> <p>3 absolutely bare bald facts, you would be left with</p> <p>4 a pretty dry story at the end of the day. So I think on</p> <p>5 occasion you do an element of interpretation. You might</p> <p>6 call it "factual inference" or something like that, but</p> <p>7 it still has to pass the test of being a fair and</p> <p>8 balanced news story.</p> <p>9 Q. All right. Are you aware that the PCC editors' code</p> <p>10 actually prohibits this blurring of news and comment?</p> <p>11 A. Yes, yes.</p> <p>12 Q. That is something that factors into the decisions that</p> <p>13 you make when you are writing your articles, does it?</p> <p>14 A. Yes.</p> <p>15 Q. Right, okay. I am going to refer to two headlines from</p> <p>16 articles that you have written which we refer to.</p> <p>17 I have given you these. I am not going to show you the</p> <p>18 article; I am just going to read the headline, just so</p> <p>19 I can understand. The first article is from</p> <p>20 2 October 2011, from the Mail Online -- I should make</p> <p>21 that clear. It says this, the headline:</p> <p>22 "At last, we get a vote on Europe as MPs are forced</p> <p>23 to decide on referendum."</p> <p>24 It is obviously a news article about a vote on</p> <p>25 Europe because MPs are forced to decide on referendum.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 43</p>
<p>1 very much as a news reporter and try not to get involved</p> <p>2 in political opinion or comment.</p> <p>3 Q. All right. I will come back to your own personal style</p> <p>4 and the articles that you write in a moment, perhaps.</p> <p>5 But as a matter of general perception, do you think --</p> <p>6 I am not just asking you about your own newspaper. Do</p> <p>7 you think that the newspapers have increasingly blurred</p> <p>8 the line between news and comment, or is that simply not</p> <p>9 a fair perception?</p> <p>10 A. It wouldn't be my view, no.</p> <p>11 Q. It is not your view. So now talking about your own</p> <p>12 personal experience. You have told me that is probably</p> <p>13 the fairest thing to ask you about. You have told us</p> <p>14 you approach stories in the same way. You research the</p> <p>15 facts, you present them -- do you consider that you</p> <p>16 present them in a particularly neutral way without any</p> <p>17 opinion or comment coming into those articles?</p> <p>18 A. I try to write all news stories in a fair and balanced</p> <p>19 way.</p> <p>20 Q. So am I right in thinking, then, that when you write an</p> <p>21 article -- a news article, a news report -- that you</p> <p>22 would ensure or try to ensure as best you can that there</p> <p>23 is no comment or opinion within that article?</p> <p>24 A. Well, broadly speaking, yes. But, I mean, if -- when</p> <p>25 you are writing a news story, there is an element of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 42</p>	<p>1 Can you see that the words "at last" in that headline</p> <p>2 impute a degree of comment or opinion?</p> <p>3 A. First of all, I write for the Mail on Sunday newspaper.</p> <p>4 I do not write for the Mail Online. So I can't</p> <p>5 answer -- I haven't seen that Mail Online article and</p> <p>6 I am not sure whether the newspaper article said the</p> <p>7 same thing. So I would much rather see it before</p> <p>8 commenting on it.</p> <p>9 Q. Of course. I can hand it to you, if you like, but it is</p> <p>10 by yourself and Brendan Carlin and that is the headline.</p> <p>11 But ignore for a moment whether or not you wrote it or</p> <p>12 whether you had any input into it at all; can you</p> <p>13 understand that by adding the words "at last", there is</p> <p>14 a degree of comment or opinion?</p> <p>15 A. Well, having said I am not sure whether I had anything</p> <p>16 to do with that Mail Online article, I have to say that</p> <p>17 I think merely to say "At last, an EU referendum on the</p> <p>18 way" is pretty mild by way of comment.</p> <p>19 Q. Right. I note what you say. I refer now to a second</p> <p>20 headline which I have managed to not be able to find,</p> <p>21 but it is from today, a headline about Mr Cameron's</p> <p>22 speech today about welfare benefit reform. Yes? You</p> <p>23 will be aware that he has made a speech in which he has</p> <p>24 indicated that no concrete proposals have been put. He</p> <p>25 has indicated that certain changes might be made to the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 44</p>

11 (Pages 41 to 44)

<p>1 benefit system. The headline from the article you've 2 written -- and I apologise; I can't find it 3 immediately -- uses the word "feckless". It says 4 "Mr Cameron removes benefit from the feckless 5 under-25s"; yes? Do you remember that headline? 6 A. You haven't shown me this article and I don't know 7 whether that's online or the newspaper. 8 Q. I will endeavour to find it and we can discuss it. But 9 again, there is no reference to the word "feckless" in 10 Mr Cameron's speech. 11 I understand you also conducted an interview with 12 Mr Cameron set out in that article, which makes no 13 reference to the word "feckless". Again, can you 14 understand -- and I will show you the article in due 15 course, in order to be fair -- that inserting the word 16 "feckless", again, introduces a degree of comment or 17 opinion into the article? 18 A. Well, I haven't written anything about his speech, 19 because the speech was on Monday. What I have -- what 20 I did do, I interviewed the Prime Minister and that 21 article appeared in the paper. 22 Q. Yes. 23 A. And -- but the use of the word "feckless" -- in fact, in 24 our article, we went out of our way to make it clear 25 that not everyone on the housing benefit under-25 was Page 45</p>	<p>1 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: It is an article by Mr Walters. I will 2 find it. 3 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I have just seen it. It is the Mail 4 Online. 5 Quite apart from that, I have a slightly different 6 point. Do I gather you don't write the headlines? 7 A. No, I don't. 8 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: It is now on screen, I think. 9 Headlines are written by subeditors, normally, and 10 I think I have been told that that is absolutely 11 standard. 12 A. It is standard for subeditors to write headlines, not 13 reporters. Yes, sir, it is. 14 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: And not to check them through with 15 someone as senior as you? 16 A. Yes, they often do check them with a senior reporter. 17 Yes, they do. They do. 18 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I am just trying to understand it. 19 A. Yes, they do, sir, yes. Subeditors normally write 20 headlines and if they think it is something 21 controversial, they will often check it with the senior 22 reporter who has written it. That is true. 23 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Can we just agree a number of facts. 24 This article appears with your by-line, "by Simon 25 Walters", yes? Page 47</p>
<p>1 going to be deprived of the benefit but there would be 2 certain exceptions. 3 Q. I understand. 4 A. And in addition, in the article, there was a very strong 5 comment from a Labour official, saying they were opposed 6 to this and talking about the damaging effects they 7 thought it would have. So I think we went to pretty 8 great lengths to make a fair piece, even in the context 9 of it being an interview with the Prime Minister. As to 10 calling them "feckless" -- I mean, by his remarks, he 11 repeatedly talked about irresponsible behaviour and 12 I think for the newspaper to describe that as him 13 talking about feckless people is not particularly 14 unfair. 15 Q. I understand. 16 A. I think it reflects exactly what he meant. 17 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Can I just ask -- 18 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Of course. 19 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I have not seen this, but this is 20 only today. So you don't know what the headline is 21 today? 22 A. Well, I write for the Mail on Sunday, sir. 23 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I see. 24 A. I don't know whether you are referring to an article in 25 the Daily Mail about his speech or something else. Page 46</p>	<p>1 A. Yes. 2 Q. I know it's on the Mail Online website but it appears 3 with your name on it. Forget the headline for the 4 moment. That would suggest that you wrote the article? 5 A. I did, yes. 6 Q. The first line of it is: 7 "Radical new welfare cuts targeting feckless couples 8 who have children and expect to live on state handouts 9 will be proposed by David Cameron tomorrow." 10 Do you see that? 11 A. Yes. 12 Q. So the word "feckless" appears in the article as well as 13 in the headline. 14 A. Yes, yes. 15 Q. But you would say overall the article is a fair and 16 balanced one and the use of words "feckless" doesn't 17 undermine that general principle? 18 A. I don't think it does because it is absolutely clear 19 that that is what the Prime Minister is referring to. 20 Q. Thank you very much. So generally speaking, then, you 21 don't think there is a particular problem with the 22 blurring of news and comment in general terms and you 23 personally don't see any problem with the way in which 24 you write your articles. You think that there is 25 compliance with the relevant parts of the editor's code Page 48</p>

12 (Pages 45 to 48)

1 in that respect?

2 **A. Yes, we go to great length to comply with it, yes.**

3 Q. I guess that would mean you wouldn't propose any changes

4 to the current system in order to ensure there is no

5 further blurring of that line; that follows?

6 **A. Well, I don't accept that there is an enormous blurring,**

7 **not by my newspaper, no.**

8 Q. Okay. Moving on then to the second change that you have

9 identified, please. Witness statement paragraph 15

10 onwards. Downing Street lobby briefings. You have

11 explained that in the time you have been a political

12 journalist, lobby briefings have changed considerably.

13 They used to be very secretive, you tell us. You tell

14 us that there was no disclosure even that they were

15 happening at one stage. It was a very closed world as

16 well, you also explained.

17 Now a full account of briefings is place on the

18 Number 10 website, as I understand it, and there has

19 been greater openness.

20 Then, at paragraph 18, you say:

21 "There are pros and cons to this. Greater openness

22 is welcome. But journalists are always in search of new

23 information of interest to readers or viewers. If by

24 making briefings public Downing Street is more cautious,

25 journalists will go elsewhere in search of new

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1 information."

2 **A. Yes.**

3 Q. So actually greater transparency means, what, that

4 actually a problem is created, in a sense, because

5 people will want to get more exclusive information from

6 another source; is that right?

7 **A. That is what I mean, yes.**

8 Q. Okay. Are there any changes that you would like to see

9 to the lobby system or do you think it works as it is?

10 **A. Well, I think a lot of people don't really understand**

11 **how the lobby works.**

12 Q. No.

13 **A. For example, I play virtually no part -- I never go to**

14 **lobby briefings. The lobby briefings, their main**

15 **function is for daily newspaper journalists. There are**

16 **lobby briefings at one in the morning, at one in the**

17 **afternoon, and it is a way of daily journalists**

18 **constantly getting feedback from Downing Street or**

19 **whoever on their response to the news items of the day.**

20 **If you are writing for a Sunday newspaper that**

21 **doesn't really apply. So I don't think I have been to**

22 **a lobby briefing for many, many years. And the lobby --**

23 **it did used to be ridiculously secretive. Now it is**

24 **very open and the briefings are all published online.**

25 **I think anyone can go to the morning briefings.**

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1 **So I think it is a very big myth. There is nothing**

2 **really happening at lobby briefings, other than an**

3 **on-the-record briefing and a lot of journalists like me,**

4 **Sunday journalists, don't go anyway.**

5 Q. So no changes that you would propose?

6 **A. No, I don't think so. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.**

7 **I have heard vague suggestions of all sorts of other**

8 **ideas which all sound rather cumbersome, because to be**

9 **a member of the lobby really all it means is you are**

10 **accredited to report from the Houses of Parliament.**

11 **That is really all it means. In many ways it is**

12 **self-policing, because if you misbehave or you betray**

13 **confidences or you write stories that are regularly**

14 **inaccurate you will soon be found out and you will not**

15 **survive very long.**

16 Q. Okay. The third change you identify is the change in

17 roll of press officers and the introduction of spin

18 doctors?

19 **A. Yes.**

20 Q. You explain that the number of press spokesmen or people

21 employed as press spokesmen or political advisers has

22 increased. You tell us at paragraphs 21 to 22 that

23 particularly during Mr Blair's government much energy

24 was devoted to ensuring that all departments were "on

25 message", you say in inverted commas:

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1 "... ie repeating the Downing Street line on any

2 given issue."

3 You say for a government that makes sense, because

4 they can keep political control over what is being said.

5 You say it could be argued that that is not in the

6 public interest.

7 The one change that you say you could do is to give

8 back to Whitehall departments the autonomy they once

9 had. Is that a suggestion that you would seriously put

10 forward, or is that something you think is aspirational?

11 **A. I think it is more aspirational, because, frankly,**

12 **I think it would cause chaos in the age of 24/7 media.**

13 **It is impossible to get the perfect answer to this.**

14 **Governments need to have a central message, to have**

15 **a coordinated response. If they are being phoned every**

16 **five minutes by a newspaper or television company on**

17 **a developing news story, if department A gives**

18 **a different response to department B, that can cause**

19 **confusion in itself.**

20 **So therefore it is common sense to coordinate it.**

21 **However, the downside of that, if it becomes completely**

22 **coordinated and you have, for example, a very powerful**

23 **government, it gives the person with the message, the**

24 **senior press spokesperson at Downing Street, arguably**

25 **too much power and influence to manipulate that message**

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<p>1 and to suppress things that might be embarrassing to the 2 government. 3 Q. Is that a change we just have to live with, or is there 4 something that could be done? 5 A. I think it is something you have to live with. But in 6 my experience dealing as a reporter at the sharp end of 7 all this, it is simply a reminder that in an age of mass 8 communication that when the message is so important that 9 if a government gets too much power over that message, 10 it can present a danger itself. 11 Q. I then wish to ask you about your own relationship with 12 politicians. You deal with this at paragraph 24 onwards 13 of your statement. You explain that like most political 14 journalists you entertain politicians at the company's 15 expense on an occasional basis for lunch or tea or 16 drinks, although by far the majority of your contacts 17 would be just conversations or on the phone, and you 18 explain that this is to get them to know them better and 19 to build a relationship and vice versa. 20 Now, how important is it to you, as a political 21 journalist, to be able to have that interaction with 22 politicians without interference, and by "interference" 23 I mean the imposition of rules or the requirement to 24 keep a careful note of everything that is said in such 25 a conversation?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 53</p>	<p>1 to make it more difficult for you to report what they 2 are up to, if they have done something that they 3 shouldn't be doing, if you've become close personal 4 friends. I think it is best to avoid it if you can. 5 Q. All right. You also explain -- in fact, the way you put 6 it is that you say that you: 7 "... do not socialise with politicians or officials 8 outside of work hours. That way risks are minimised and 9 managed." 10 When you do meet with politicians in your day-to-day 11 interactions, what is it you think they are seeking from 12 you? I know you have told us what you are seeking from 13 them, information and so on -- 14 A. Probably to promote their reputation. But I am well 15 aware of that. If you -- they might want to tell you 16 about some policy they have got or some other piece of 17 information, and obviously you have to take into account 18 what their motives might be. But there is only one 19 yardstick that I would apply to it, and that is whether 20 it is factual or not, whether it is publishable, and 21 whether it should be published. 22 Yes, I do -- I am aware of what their motives might 23 or might not be, and would make an allowance for that in 24 assessing whether or not it is worth pursuing. 25 Q. Can I ask you about one step up, ie the relationship</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 55</p>
<p>1 A. Well, it is the most important part of my job, because 2 my job is obtaining information, reporting what is going 3 on in government and Parliament, and for the most part 4 that information comes from individuals: politicians or 5 officials or others. If you want to get that kind of 6 information you have to build a relationship of trust 7 with people. This is simply the way of doing it, by 8 talking to people. 9 Q. What about socialising with politicians, do you do that, 10 or is contact limited to occasional lunch? 11 A. I don't -- I prefer not to socialise out of work with 12 politicians. The only minister who I have been personal 13 friends with was Mo Mowlem. Since she is no longer 14 here, I don't mind talking about it. But that was only 15 because she showed a particular interest in my -- I had 16 a handicapped daughter and she showed a great interest 17 in her. So yes, she came to mine and I went to hers and 18 she came to my daughter's funeral. But outside that 19 I don't socialise with politicians for the most part. 20 Q. Is that because you see inherent risks in that? 21 A. Yes, it is, because there are risks in it. If you 22 become -- well, I think it is the same in any 23 profession, really. If you -- there is -- that kind of 24 blurring is a danger and if you become personally 25 friendly with a politician then, of course, it is going</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 54</p>	<p>1 between proprietors and politicians, or even editors and 2 politicians. You deal with this at paragraph 31 onwards 3 of your statement. You explain that -- you say this, 4 I will read it out: 5 "Tony Blair's decision to court News International 6 led to a very close relationship in which Downing Street 7 gave privileged information to News International, and 8 in return News International supported the Government on 9 certain issues, for example the Iraq war." 10 That is a bold statement to make; what information 11 do you have that supports that assertion? 12 A. Well, I know people who were involved in that flow of 13 information. I am not going to say who they were. But 14 it was an open secret that Downing Street could more or 15 less pick up the phone and dictate an article in certain 16 News International journals. It was well known in the 17 lobby. 18 Q. In return for support on certain issues? 19 A. Well, the amount of support that they gave them in that 20 period was pretty obvious, because it was obvious in 21 their editorials. What other support they may or may 22 not have given them, I am not privy to that. But 23 I think we can work it out for yourselves. 24 Q. I understand you don't want to name any individuals, but 25 can you give us detail on what issues -- well, you say</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 56</p>

14 (Pages 53 to 56)

<p>1 "News International supported the Government on certain 2 issues, for example the Iraq war"; are there any other 3 issues where support was offered? 4 A. On a broad range of policies -- not all of them, but 5 broadly, they gave them strong support. 6 Q. Apart from the fact this was an open secret is there any 7 evidence or anything else that you can say to us about 8 that? 9 A. No. 10 Q. All right. Paragraph 34, please, of your statement. 11 One of the most beneficial effects of recent events, you 12 tell us, is that politicians and media are more likely 13 to remain at arm's length, and you say that essentially 14 it is in the public interests for politicians and media 15 not to be too close? 16 A. Mm-hm. 17 Q. Do you offer any views on how that distance can be 18 maintained, any practical arrangements that could be put 19 in place, to ensure that people don't become too close 20 again? 21 A. I think the existence of this Inquiry has probably been 22 one of main weapons against that. But clearly the 23 relationship between News International and the 24 government got much too close -- it is not the case now, 25 but it did get much too close. As to how you stop it; Page 57</p>	<p>1 the current system isn't perfect -- I will use your new 2 phrase, as opposed to "flawed" -- the best way of doing 3 things is to essentially uphold the laws as they exist 4 now? 5 A. Well, I am sure there are ways it could be improved. 6 But I can't say I have my own recipe or formula to do 7 so. All I would say is that I think going down the 8 state road has great dangers. 9 Q. I did say the question was optional. 10 Finally, paragraph 42 onwards, please. You say: 11 "The power of the Downing Street media machine was 12 formidable in the early years of the Blair government." 13 You give us an example in 2002 where you filed a 14 report describing how Downing Street had sought a bigger 15 role for Mr Blair in the Queen Mother's Lying in State 16 in Westminster Hall. 17 You tell us that Downing Street said that was untrue 18 and the Prime Minister complained to the PCC. Actually 19 then what happened was a senior official who actually 20 had knowledge of what had happened threatened to speak 21 publicly that the Mail on Sunday report was accurate. 22 Downing Street relented and then the PM withdrew his 23 complaint. You say if that hadn't happened there would 24 have been serious consequences for your newspaper and 25 for you professionally, even though the incident itself Page 59</p>
<p>1 prevent any one media group becoming overpowerful, 2 I suppose, and prevent any one government becoming 3 overpowerful. 4 Q. All right. Finally, I think -- there is two things 5 I wanted to ask you about. The first is future 6 regulation. You say a little about this at paragraph 39 7 onwards of this statement. Now, I make absolutely clear 8 this is an optional question. You give us a number of 9 views. You say: 10 "The current system of regulating the press may be 11 flawed." 12 Now, what aspects of the current system are, in your 13 view, flawed? 14 A. Well, I think I probably phrased that rather badly. 15 I think what I meant was it is not perfect. 16 Q. Yes. 17 A. And I don't have a great overview on media regulation. 18 I don't. My only view is that having worked at the 19 sharp end of political journalism I am well aware of the 20 enormous lengths that governments will go to to get 21 their story across, sometimes manipulate, and anything 22 that were done that gave the state any more power over 23 that kind of press freedom I think is something that 24 should be avoided if possible. 25 Q. So does that mean that you take the view that although Page 58</p>	<p>1 was of little consequence. 2 I think there was something you wanted to add in 3 respect of that story? 4 A. Well, it is only since it came out, when 5 Alastair Campbell gave evidence. 6 Q. Yes. 7 A. As I say, it is essentially a relatively trivial matter. 8 I think the reason I wanted to just address it briefly 9 is because Mr Campbell spoke about it and because it is 10 also a very direct experience from my point of view of 11 this kind of interaction. It was at a time when the 12 Downing Street press machine in 2002 -- it was at its 13 most powerful, really, and the journals involved were 14 the Spectator, the Standard and Mail on Sunday, owned by 15 the Telegraph and Associated Newspapers, arguably two of 16 the media groups who weren't necessarily taking the 17 Downing Street line, and the Spectator and the Standard 18 published partial reports of the incident to start with. 19 Downing Street put in a complaint to the PCC and 20 Black Rod was effectively lent on to give a semi denial 21 of those stories which Mr Campbell referred to. Black 22 Rod himself said in his statement to the PCC it was 23 a very narrow denial and he said to them "Don't push 24 this any further because I am not prepared to lie and we 25 both know that it is fundamentally true". Page 60</p>

<p>1 Then what happened was the Mail on Sunday 2 investigated this story, established the true version, 3 published it. We then had the Downing Street complain 4 to the PCC about us and it was only because of the 5 courage of Black Rod, who was prepared to defy them, and 6 was prepared to go public and make a statement on the 7 matter, saying that -- I think you have probably seen 8 the statement. He talks about constant phone calls, 9 sustained pressure, even on the day that the coffin 10 arrived at Westminster Number 10 asked for a greater 11 role for the Prime Minister. 12 It was only because he was prepared to make a public 13 statement that Downing Street backed down. 14 Now, had he not done that it would have been 15 catastrophic for all three publications, the editors and 16 me as well, and I just think it is an example of 17 actually the PCC was actually quite effective in 18 actually acting as a mediator between the various sides. 19 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: I think I have heard a fair amount of 20 evidence on this story, haven't I, and seen various 21 numbers of the document. 22 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Yes. I just wanted to give Mr Walters 23 the opportunity to say what he had to say about this. 24 Does that conclude what you wanted to say? 25 A. Yes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 61</p>	<p>1 stories. I think it is probably important that a senior 2 reporter is consulted and yes, they do have to be 3 handled very sensitively because they can give the wrong 4 impression if not handled carefully. 5 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: That is the point, isn't it? Where 6 people do make complaints it is rather odd, because you 7 would expect that care should be taken, because the 8 headline is what is going to grab people's attention, 9 isn't it? 10 A. Headlines have to be written very carefully, yes. 11 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Does that always happen? 12 A. Well, I am sure sometimes headlines are -- headlines 13 could be improved upon. But by and large my newspaper 14 takes great care in composing its headlines. 15 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you. 16 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Thank you very much. Those are all the 17 questions I had. 18 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you. 19 MS PATRY-HOSKINS: Thank you, Mr Walters. That concludes 20 the evidence for today. 21 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: Thank you very much indeed. 22 10 o'clock tomorrow. 23 (3.40 pm) 24 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10 o'clock the following day) 25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 63</p>
<p>1 Q. I didn't want to interrupt. 2 Mr Walters, those are all my questions. I am very 3 aware that I didn't manage to find the hard copy of the 4 article relating to Mr Cameron's welfare benefit reform. 5 I will ensure you are provided with a copy, and if it is 6 acceptable to Lord Justice Leveson, if there is any -- 7 LORD JUSTICE LEVESON: We can deal with headlines in this 8 way: I have been aware throughout the Inquiry that 9 reporters don't write the headlines. I entirely 10 understand the system. But one of the concerns that 11 have been repeatedly expressed to me has been the 12 discordance between careful analysis of the facts and 13 the headlines. 14 I am sure you are aware of the point, because it has 15 been made by a large number of the witnesses who have 16 given evidence before me. That is why I wondered and 17 asked you specifically about a headline, that you were 18 after all the political editor, not, as it were, a cub 19 reporter who can leave it to their elders and betters. 20 I am just wondering whether you have anything to say 21 about this potential discordance between headlines and 22 articles. 23 A. Yes, I think headlines have to be treated with extreme 24 care, and on a big story I would normally expect to be 25 consulted on a headline that was going on one of my</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 62</p>	

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