

Closing Statement

Michelle Stanistreet

16th July 2012

on behalf of

the National Union of Journalists

IN THE LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE PRESS

CLOSING STATEMENT OF MICHELLE STANISTREET

ON BEHALF OF

THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Lord Justice Leveson and the Inquiry team for granting the NUJ core participant status in this inquiry and ensuring that the voice of journalists was heard throughout. In particular, the work done to ensure that those journalists who were too scared to give evidence to the Inquiry directly for fear of the professional consequences were able to give evidence through me, is greatly appreciated by the NUJ and all those journalists who gave testimony in this way.

Culture, Practices & Ethics of the Press – the Working Reality

At the outset of this Inquiry I made it clear that there were broad issues to be considered when examining the culture, practices and ethics of the press. Understanding the reality of life in many newsrooms and the daily pressures journalists can face is critical in considering the problems as well as the solutions.

It has been clearly demonstrated that a culture of bullying exists in some workplaces, resulting in unacceptable pressure on journalists to deliver the goods, even if that means producing misleading or inaccurate material.

This makes the practicalities of defending the principles of ethical journalism in the workplace a difficult if not impossible task for many journalists.

This much was obvious from the anonymous testimony submitted by the NUJ on behalf of 12 journalists with extensive experience of working across a range of titles.

Journalist number one, with over 30 years' experience in the industry, told the inquiry via the NUJ about the pressure to deliver the goods and the fear of consequences to your career if you do not comply:

“You do what you’re told when you’re told. People really need to understand what it was like. It takes a pretty brave person to take a stand. Your life would be made miserable and you’d quickly find yourself out of work. You’re terrified

if you do anything you'll not get any work in the rest of the industry. You grit your teeth and put up with it. You know it's wrong, but you don't want to be a Judas. If you want a career in the future you shut up and you keep quiet."

When investigative reporter Nick Davies appeared before the Inquiry he stressed why it is vital the identity of journalists speaking out is protected. He said: "*...it's a very important part of this picture that there is a culture of bullying in some Fleet Street newspapers, and so it's not just a question of 'I'll lose my job'. It's nastier than that, and the fear is real, and therefore you would have a high proportion of these sources saying, 'I will talk to you but only on this condition of anonymity' and I appreciate that's very difficult for the Inquiry.*" [Day 9, 67:2].

Journalist Number 2 in the NUJ testimony spoke about the impact of relentless bullying:

"During my time at the News of the World, I experienced pretty much constant bullying. My section editor would find fault with everything I did, making my life absolute hell. She sent emails behind my back, made comments about my weight. Just nasty stuff, really. It was the culture throughout the place. A woman reporter working for the newsdesk was sent sexually explicit text messages by someone senior to her. When she complained, she was just told not to make a fuss. The behaviour was all quite open, everyone joins in."

The institutional nature of bullying in some workplaces was reinforced by Matt Driscoll's evidence to the Inquiry, when he spoke about the impact of bullying and pressure during his time at the News of the World and the depression it triggered in him. The Tribunal in his case found that the editor had presided over a culture of bullying and Driscoll believes his career has been "finished" as a result of challenging his treatment.

Speaking about the use of unethical practices, he said: "At the time I felt uneasy about such methods [blagging]. However, I knew that I could not bring up my concerns on the editorial floor for fear of being seen as a troublemaker. Any writer who questioned the morality of these methods would have been a

marked man....*It seemed that any method that could stand a story up was fair game. It was also clear that there was massive pressure from the top to break stories. It was largely accepted that this pressure came from the proprietors and editors on the basis that big, sensational stories sells papers and therefore makes money.*"

He added: "*I'm the guy who's taken on the bosses, really. You know, tribunals like this in the newspaper industry are extremely rare. Normally there's some kind of out-of-court settlement. For it to go the distance is very rare, so who would want to employ someone who's taken on the boss and won and is also happy to talk out about it? I'm happy to highlight exactly how bad it was and how bad the treatment I had to suffer was, so I can't imagine any editor wanting to snap me up tomorrow.*" **[Day 19, 3:20]**

Journalist 4, with over 32 years experience in the industry, spoke of the routine nature of abuse and humiliation in the evidence given via the NUJ.

"Those who objected were routinely abused verbally publicly. Humiliation was the most minor punishment for failure. Dismissal or relegation to the least favourable shifts, was much more common. A deliberate climate of fear and tension was created by management to improve performance. The only unwritten rule for those subjected to it were never complain publicly and never refuse an order. This included when being ordered to do something illegal, such as steal documents from a car, which I witnessed on one occasion. Another reporter was encouraged to steal a report from a civil servant's brief case after getting him drunk in a bar. This latter event I did not witness, but I watched as the order was given over the telephone and later read the said report in the office."

Journalist 7 in the NUJ testimony, spoke of the consequences after speaking out against the anti-Muslim nature of stories being assigned.

"On numerous occasions, knowing all too well that whatever balance or neutrality I incorporated into my stories would be changed or removed, I asked the news editors to remove my byline from the final piece. This earned

me the reputation and nickname of the 'token leftie' in the newsroom - and in what was often portrayed as a 'joke', solely for the amusement of the news editors and reporters, I was targeted to produce the highest number of anti-Muslim stories. Not once did I put a story of this ilk forward of my own accord - yet each time the news editors came to the reporters' desk to hand out cuts from other papers, or to instruct us to follow up something from the news wires that was anti-Islam, it was prefaced with: "Right, we'll give this story to our most right-wing reporter...make sure you make it as right-wing as you can." This didn't stop, even when I was in tears because I hated what I was being forced to do so passionately. This I regard, quite simply as bullying."

This mirrored the experience of reporter Richard Peppiatt who gave evidence to the Inquiry about his time as a reporter at the Daily Star.

He said: "Reporters, including myself, were often unhappy about some of the stories we were pressured to write. Certain executives would often overplay the strength of a story in editorial conference to please the editor, but would then lean on the reporter tasked with writing it to make the story fit what they'd pitched.

"It seemed to me that reporters' employment contracts were structured specifically to limit the possibility of any ethical protest. Many, including myself, were on casual contracts, which is to say they can be terminated at anytime. The spectre of being 'let go' at any moment is a powerful deterrent against sticking your head above the trench if you disagree with something that is occurring. Even if someone was bold enough to complain, no channel existed for employees to raise concerns about ethical or journalistic practices.

"My feeling was certainly that the further up the chain of command you went the less, not more, concern over newsroom behaviour existed. In a broader sense, Richard Desmond's investment in his newsroom operation was/is woeful, and this has resulted in too few reporters to adequately do their job. I recollect one day there being just myself and two other reporters to write the whole newspaper. We were forced to use pseudonyms just to make it appear

to readers there were more of us. Any fact checking etc goes out the window when you have such a heaving workload.” [Day 9, 46:4].

The pressure on new recruits to the industry can be particularly high, especially given the shortage of permanent staff jobs and the increasingly high reliance on casual shifts for work. The precarious nature of such employment makes it even harder for journalists to challenge pressure to behave in a way they believe to be unethical.

Journalist 12, giving testimony through the NUJ, told the Inquiry about the experience of working on a national newspaper:

“The bullying that goes on has to be seen to be believed. A lot of the time it’s shouting and swearing, being humiliated and made to feel really stupid. I’ve been so tempted to just walk out so many times, but I just bite my tongue and put up with it. I can barely make ends meet as it is. I can’t afford to lose my job. The other problem is the huge number of new journalists working for free on internships - it’s incredibly competitive to get a foot in the door, so once you’re there you’re desperate not to blow it. I think that makes it even easier for editors to treat you like dirt. But I’ve seen other people being treated much worse than me - literally reduced to tears - and in a way that makes me feel worse because I’ve not intervened to stop it. I used to work in the corporate sector before retraining and to be honest never expected newspapers to be like this, not in this day and age.”

Academics giving evidence to the Inquiry also backed up the reality of the fear factor amongst journalists, and the anxiety about the repercussions of speaking openly about the prevailing culture within the industry.

Angela Phillips, Senior Lecturer at City University, described how journalists would only talk to her on the guarantee of anonymity, *“I must add that when I interviewed these journalists, they were paranoid about me suggesting what newspaper they worked for because they were afraid that somebody might work out who they were. They could not speak publicly” [Day 13, 34:25].*

Professor Barnett of the University of Westminster also stressed this culture of fear and the necessity of granting anonymity if the Inquiry wished journalists to come forward to give evidence **[Day 13, 38:18]**.

It is significant that despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the industry denies the existence of such pressure, and dismissed the existence of the perceived threat of “career blight” if journalists came forward and gave evidence in person. The reality is that putting your head above the parapet and speaking out publicly is simply not an option for many journalists, who absolutely fear losing their job or making themselves unemployable in the future. This is why this prevailing culture within our newsrooms needs to be tackled.

Conscience Clause

It is in this context – of the cut and thrust business of journalistic ethics and the commercial and editorial pressures that our members can face – that we have been campaigning for some years now for a Conscience Clause in contracts of employment. So that when journalists stand up for a principle of journalistic ethics they have a contractual protection against being dismissed. And – crucially - so they have the confidence and the security to put their head above the parapet in the first place.

This has been a demand that has been rejected both by the PCC and the Society Of Editors – despite a recommendation from the House of Commons Select Committee into Privacy and Media Intrusion in 2003.

The text of the Conscience Clause reads: “A journalist has the right to refuse assignments or be identified as the creator of editorial which would break the letter or the spirit of the Code. No journalist should be disciplined or suffer detriment to their career for asserting his/her rights to act according to the Code.”

It is significant that not one editor or proprietor in giving evidence at the Inquiry has criticised the idea of a Conscience Clause. Indeed, even Rupert Murdoch in cross examination conceded that it was a “good idea.”

The introduction of such a contractually binding protection would be a great advance for all journalists and for journalism practices and culture in the UK. However, whilst the Conscience Clause would be a great step forward it cannot in and of itself, of course, be a complete remedy for the problems of widespread bullying, pressure and unethical behaviour cultivated and condoned as the working culture by senior executives within newsrooms.

Collective Bargaining – Guarding the Guardians

In talking at the outset of this Inquiry about the vital role of the press in acting as a watchdog in any democratic society, you posed the important question, Who Guards the Guardians?

It is the view of the NUJ that a fundamental bulwark for accountability within newsrooms is the role of an independent trade union and, critically, its ability of its members to carry out collective bargaining. An NUJ workplace chapel is not simply the vehicle for putting together pay claims and campaigning for better terms and conditions, it's also the place where members can raise issues of concern on matters ethical, on staffing levels, and on bullying and editorial pressure within their workplace.

Of course individual journalists can and do join the NUJ, regardless of whether their employer has agreed to a collective bargaining agreement. But the reality is that individual membership is not enough, it gives no collective protection within the workplace and leaves journalists without the independent protection and voice that their trade union provides.

The reality of the media industry is that their attitude towards trade unions leaves a lot to be desired. The NUJ has many positive and engaged relationships with managements, despite the inevitable friction created during a time of disagreement or dispute. However, there are companies within the

media industry who have a particularly intransigent view of role of collective bargaining, and indeed will go to great lengths to block the NUJ from its titles.

Take Rupert Murdoch - he created and funded his own proxy union, the News International Staff Association, which was later refused a Certificate of Independence by the Certification Officer because of its lack of Independence from the employer. This was cynically established on the eve of the legislative changes being introduced that saw the restoration of basic trade union recognition rights. All to keep the NUJ and our sister unions out of Wapping.

In other newspaper groups, the vehement hostility towards trade unions leads to a fear factor that serves to inhibit journalists from feeling able to be identified as a union member. The late Sir David English, former editor of the Daily Mail, famously once bragged that the purpose of Associated Newspapers' move to personal contracts in 1989, and the company's targeting of individuals who wanted to stick to union-negotiated salaries, was "to make the union wither on the vine". It took a 12 year battle by Dave Wilson, the NUJ Father of Chapel at the Mail, that went all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, to win employment rights in a victory for workers throughout Europe. (See *Associated Newspapers v Wilson* [1995] 2 AC 454 in the House of Lords and *Wilson v UK* [2002] IRLR 568 in the European Court of Human Rights).

This attitude towards the trade union movement has no place in a civilised society, and certainly no place in our media groups who play such an influential role in civic life. The right to collective bargaining is a moral and human right – and it is no coincidence that some of the worst abuses raised during the Inquiry occurred within workplaces where the NUJ has been blocked out and excluded for many years.

The establishment of collective bargaining as one vital means of preventing the unacceptable "culture, practices and ethics" is not special pleading on behalf of a vested interest group. For the right to collective bargaining is as fundamental as the right to privacy under Article 8 of the Convention and the right to freedom of expression under Article 10. Article 11 protects everyone's

freedom of association and “the right to be a member of a trade union for the protection of his interests”.

We believe there is a clear link between a strong trade union presence in a workplace and a strong ethical awareness. Collective trade union representation is a moral, human right and it is unacceptable that journalists are denied this right in UK newspapers.

This independent protection is particularly vital when you consider the lack of interest and concern proprietors have displayed for the role of workplace culture, behavior and ethics in the course of the Inquiry.

Rupert Murdoch was questioned by John Hendy QC, counsel to the NUJ, about the testimony from journalists who had worked for his titles and had experienced bullying and unacceptable pressure. Murdoch’s response? “Why didn’t she resign?” As Lord Justice Leveson had to point out, “I think the problem with that might be that she needs a job.” **[Day 65, 96:6]**

When challenged on the evidence of unethical practices, in the treatment of journalists by his executives, Rupert Murdoch was bullish in his response: “I don’t believe there is any or has been any. We have a very large staff of very, very well-paid journalists, and they are perfectly free to join the NUJ whenever they wish.” When it was pointed out that was not quite the point, he replied: “Well, it is the point. If they were unhappy or being treated unethically, they can join the NUJ.”

Richard Desmond, owner of Northern & Shell, the publishers of Express Newspapers, similarly gave an insight into the ethical approach taken by his titles when he gave evidence to the Inquiry.

"Ethical - I don't know what the word means, perhaps you would explain what the word means." He added: "We do not talk about ethics or morals because it's a very fine line and everybody is different."

For many journalists working on his titles, the “fine line” has been a clear one since Richard Desmond purchased the titles 12 years ago. Individual

journalists and the NUJ have gone on record complaining about editorial interference and abuse of journalistic ethics. The NUJ chapel, of which I was an NUJ rep during my nine year career on the Sunday Express, twice reported Desmond and his editor to the PCC after journalists came under pressure to write unethical material.

Journalists sadly cannot necessarily rely on their editors or their proprietors to support them if they take a stand on a question of journalistic ethics – that is why it is vital that their union can provide that protection and support, and that is why strong workplace chapels are so important.

Future of Press Regulation – Time for Media Accountability

The NUJ has made it clear in its submission to Module 4 that the years of self-regulation on the media bosses terms has amounted to no regulation at all.

We want a regulatory system that is genuinely independent – that means independent from government and, critically, independent from the industry. That is the only way we can have a system of proper media accountability.

It is unsurprising that those who form the vested interests in the industry – the owners and editors – have reacted with forceful and concerted lobbying throughout the course of this Inquiry. Their efforts are designed to ensure that the outcome from this Inquiry is as close to the status quo as they can possibly get away with.

The much-vaunted “new” model of a successor to the PCC, based on a system of commercial contracts and an ill-conceived attempt to individualise responsibility through a new system for the distribution of press cards, is nothing more than a rebranding exercise, in a bid to enable the industry to once more get away with a spell in the last chance saloon of self regulation.

The “solutions” offered up by Lords Black and Hunt amount to nothing more than more of the same. It is significant that in setting out their way forward,

they have ruled out greater involvement of members of the public and also of the NUJ. Similarly, despite the powerful evidence given to the Inquiry by campaign groups demonstrating the failures of the PCC on issues - such as the representation of women, the depiction of women who've experienced sexual violence, the representation of disabled people, or vulnerable groups in society such as asylum seekers – those calling for a rebranded PCC have rejected the need to allow third party complaints. Their model does nothing to address the clear problems and lack of genuine accountability that has led to the establishment of this Inquiry in the first place and represents yet another wasted opportunity for the industry to genuinely reform from within.

This is no surprise to the NUJ. The industry has had repeated and numerous opportunities to reform itself and has consistently failed to do so. The PCC itself was an attempt to rebrand the old Press Council, a rebranding that actually saw the weakening of press regulation from a body seen as largely useless to one that was not only useless but was actually on occasion complicit in allowing if not conniving at illegal and unethical activity. We are now far beyond a situation where a mere ticking off and the promise of better behaviour in the future is an acceptable outcome. The PCC and those who dominate it – whether in its current format or in its reincarnated form – have lost the right to determine a future model.

Nor have they come up with a model that can even work in practice. Commercial contracts cannot and will not guarantee a change of behaviour within the industry.

The notion that somehow only self-regulation can guarantee the critical protection of press freedom is nonsense and flies in the face of clear evidence that self-regulation has failed and that other systems can work extremely well for other industries or in other jurisdictions. The evidence submitted by the NUJ from Jim Boumelha, president of the International Federation of Journalists, outlines the range of media accountability systems that exist throughout the world, many of which demonstrate a healthy balance of participation between journalists, via their trade union, the industry and the broader public.

The NUJ is no keener than anyone else on confusing protection of the rights of others with allowing governments or others in powerful positions to control what appears in the press for their own ends, and it certainly does not believe that press barons and editors should be allowed to interfere with the rights of privacy, fair trial and reputation of private citizens solely to maximise their right to make a profit. So we must identify a way of regulating that moves from self regulation on to a system that ensures protection without unduly limiting press freedom. The NUJ details its model for the future in our submission to Module 4.

We believe that if we are to achieve independent, accountable regulation it needs to be underpinned by statute enabling a framework for a new body to be established with clear terms of reference, and a structure that involves journalists and civil society as key stakeholders. This is absolutely not the same as state regulation, far from it.

Our model is based on the system in Ireland, where a Press Council was established together with a Press Ombudsman. It is significant that in Ireland, employers work sensibly and positively with the NUJ as a key stakeholder in a structure that journalists are actively represented within. The detail of this model is also dealt with in the statement submitted from Seamus Dooley, Irish Secretary of the NUJ. This co-regulatory approach would be a significant step forward in creating a system that offers real accountability and independence.

Seamus Dooley said in his statement: "It would be an overstatement to view the NUJ as having been enthusiastically welcomed by all participants but a sound working relationship developed. There was recognition by all the employer representatives that any model of regulation which excluded the NUJ would not be acceptable to government or the public."

In giving evidence to the inquiry, the Press Ombudsman of Ireland, John Horgan, also stressed the important role the NUJ plays.

He said: "I think it's extremely important. The fact that they have representation independently of the newspaper owners and newspaper

editors has been extremely important, and in fact I would -- again, just from hearsay, from talking to members of the Council, they regard the NUJ membership as being essential. [92, 75:24]

A new body must have powers of investigation, it must accept third party complaints and if it's to have teeth it must have the ability to fine repeat offenders. It needs to encourage good practice, including a Right of Reply, and offer quick and free redress to the public. It must also ensure a more ethical use of images – to do this, it is vital to extend unwaivable moral rights to cover newspapers and magazines (all specifically excluded from the 1988 Copyright, Designs and Patents Act). As the law stands, newspapers and magazines have the right to alter text and images, even if that distorts the original work. This exception was included in the Act at the behest of the publishers precisely because they wanted the right to distort text and images. Authors care much more about the integrity of their work than the publishers do. If authors were allowed stronger and more enforceable moral rights it would make it much more difficult for their work to be distorted and allow journalists to be able to dissociate themselves from such material.

A change in structure and the inclusion of journalists and civil society will have a major impact on the culture of a new regulator. Similarly, an approach that offers greater accountability to the public will have an impact on behavior within media companies. Transparent redress, and consequences for serial offenders, will do most to change corporate behaviour and ensure greater adherence to journalistic standards and ethics.

Many press freedom and media standards campaign groups have submitted evidence to the Inquiry. There are of course differences of approach and detail in the various suggestions and models put forward as alternatives to the existing model of self-regulation. Where there is clear consensus, however, is that there is a vital need for real and substantive change, and for a model in which journalists and the public play a much greater role.

Conduct – A Journalists’ Code

In the future model, a Conscience Clause should be adopted as part of a Journalists’ Code of Conduct. It is not good enough simply to have an industry code aimed at the publishers. The NUJ is a trade union which has its Code of Conduct at its heart and would be a sensible starting point for any new code. Established in 1936 it is embedded in our rule book and by signing our membership form, it is made clear to journalists that they are signing up to abide by the Code.

And of course as part of that Code, we commit to robustly defending the public interest test and the ability of journalists to do their jobs freely and professionally. The NUJ would vigorously defend members using “other means”, sometimes of course unpalatable and unpopular, if it is in the pursuit of a story that is clearly in the overriding public interest. That is the duty of a journalist engaged in informing the public.

But our Code is also about public accountability. It commits journalists to do nothing that would intrude into anybody’s private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest. It commits journalists to do their utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies. It commits them to obtaining material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are overwhelmingly in the public interest and where that evidence can’t be obtained by straightforward means.

Media Ownership and Wider Issues

There are also broader issues that directly impact upon the culture, practices and ethics within the press and would do much to improve press standards. Media ownership, market share and access to distribution all play a significant part in how the media conducts its business. The increasing consolidation of media ownership and the disproportionate power and influence this brings with it have distorted the culture within our industry. When newspaper titles

are bought and sold, there should be a rigorous public interest test. The highest bidder should not be allowed to simply walk away with our national titles in their pocket and the accompanying power and influence that brings, without adequate scrutiny to a process that invariably involves a secretive sealed bid.

As things stand, companies sometimes close down titles in their entirety without putting the publication up for sale – impacting upon plurality and preventing new operators coming into the sector. If a company decides it does not want to run a newspaper, it must be obliged to sell on the title - not jealously guard them to thwart potential new entrants to the market.

Consolidation of ownership serves to diminish the editorial viewpoints the public is served up. This is an issue not just in our national titles, but also in the regional and local press and in devolved administrations.

The NUJ believes that limits should be set on news market share. We want to see the maximum market share set at 25 per cent for national news; regional news on all platforms and in each of the following platforms - radio, television, newspapers and online. Any market share that reaches or is liable to reach 15 per cent should be subject to a public interest test and public consultation. The NUJ believes that the power to invoke the public interest test should be assigned to Ofcom rather than the secretary of state, and that Ofcom should review plurality at regular intervals.

Addressing the challenge of ensuring a newspaper's access to display / shelf space in newsagents and retail outlets is also important. This is exacerbated by the monopoly ownership of distribution and of print production in the UK, serving to block competition and make it incredibly difficult for new entrants to gain a foothold in the newspaper sector.

It should not be possible for our titles – whether a national title or a local newspaper – to be bought and sold on the whim of one man, or corporation, or used as pawns to further an individual's commercial or ideological interests. A media owner shouldn't have our police and our politicians in a stranglehold

for fear of their personal peccadillos being splashed over the front pages of a newspaper. No media group should be allowed to achieve such dominance.

A Chance for Change

There has been welcome and repeated recognition by you and others in the Inquiry of the important role journalism plays and the need to protect press freedom. Journalism is a force for good, a vital part of any democratic society. People choosing to enter the industry don't - believe me - do it for the money or the career prospects. They become journalists because they want to make a difference; they want to play their part in holding power to account, to shine a light in those dark recesses of society. They want to do their job well, professionally, and they want to keep their communities informed and expose wrongdoing.

Journalists do not, however, operate in a vacuum. That is why the NUJ has made great efforts in the course of this Inquiry to put the examination of the industry's culture and practices in the broader context of the current state of the industry. The newspaper industry, particularly in the local and regional press, has been in crisis over recent years. The scale of cutbacks, redundancies, casualisation and entire closure of titles has made it a very challenging and insecure time for journalists.

A busted economic model in the local and regional press has seen the slashing of costs and resources in newspaper groups that became addicted to the days of 25-30 per cent profits, rather than settle for more modest profits that would do nicely for most of our major blue-chips. It is inevitable that in cutting back on resources and journalists, the quality and diversity of content has diminished and been sacrificed in the process. Cost cutting has also taken place throughout the rest of the press. These owners are playing fast and loose with our industry. You can't do that without sacrificing quality journalism; you can't do it without cheating readers of the newspapers they

deserve; and you can't do it without sounding the death knell of an industry that plays such a critical role in our society.

In this context, the more resource-intensive areas of journalism, such as specialist correspondents and investigative journalism have become something of an endangered species and a journalist's ability to get out there and research and deliver work thoroughly has been diminished. Agency copy is topped and tailed, press releases are churned out as news. The pressure on journalists to deliver is relentless, often to unpredictable and unreasonable timescales, and without the resources to do the job well. Such pressures can lead to short cuts and can result in the abandoning of fundamental principles.

It's in this climate that pressure can build up and bullying can take hold in the cut and thrust of newsroom culture. This is, as we have seen so clearly demonstrated by many witnesses within the Inquiry, a culture led and fostered by those at the top.

Yours has been an unprecedented inquiry into the reality of how the press operates within the UK. It was born out of a scandal that shocked the public and put the spotlight on journalistic practices and ethics as never before. This has to be an Inquiry that achieves change through the implementation of recommendations that come out of it – the NUJ, like you, does not wish to see the outcomes of this Inquiry to become yet another footnote in the annals of journalistic history. It is the view of the NUJ that the outcomes and recommendations of this Inquiry provide a once-in-a generation opportunity for genuine reform and change that could do much to improve media standards, shore up the vital role of ethics in the workplace, transform the culture of the press for the better and bring about a system of media accountability that the public and journalism deserve. It is in this spirit that the recommendations and proposals from the NUJ are made.

ENDS