THE TORY government has sworn to defend the lying right-wing corporate press to the death against all their critics and rivals. The decision on March 1 to ditch the Leveson Inquiry was consistent with a stream of policy announcements.

In recent months the government has
- Forced the BBC to give up £8 million of licence fee income to subsidise reporters on local papers, giving them the opportunity to sack more staff
- Instigated an inquiry into “fake news”, by which it means internet news, to undermine new media and authenticate the press
- Launched a review to boost the “sustainability of our national and local press”, after heavy lobbying from the industry
- Ignored any ways to help the new small, mostly local, media that are the green shoots of the next generation of news media
- Supported press barons in their regular attacks on the internet giants that profit from the dissemination of material lifted from the press for free
- Indicated that the reviews are likely to lead to measures that tax or raise levies from the internet giants to subsidise the press; it’s even been hinted that more could be creamed off the BBC
- Scrapped the law based on recommendations of the Leveson report (Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act) that would penalise publications that refuse to offer cheap and accessible arbitration of complaints
- Endorsed and praised the sham press regulator IPSO, which has failed in four years of existence to comply with Leveson standards.

A lot of this was reaffirmed by culture secretary Matt Hancock in a parliamentary debate on Leveson and section 40. There was no surprise in the decisions to scrap both the proposals.

The CPBF said in a statement: “It is not press freedom the government is protecting but the press owners – the companies responsible for the phone-hacking and bribery laid bare by the first stage of Leveson, the prejudice and hatred aimed at anyone – racial, sexual or political groups – they don’t like, and the decline of the local press as they slash their workforces and their coverage to preserve their profits.”

The section 40 law was passed by the Tory-led government in 2013 to guarantee cheap and easy access, through an arbitration process, to people seeking redress for unfair reporting without going to court. It posed no threat at all to responsible journalists who are prepared to treat their readers fairly.

The law was intended to encourage publishers to sign up with a regulator that complied with Leveson’s recommendations, notably that there be such an arbitration system. There is only one such regulator, called IMPRESS, which not a single national paper has joined.

Instead nearly all of them, together with what’s left of the local press owned by the big corporate media groups, are members of their fake regulator IPSO. Hancock said IPSO was offering arbitration itself, but that is not true. It has announced a voluntary scheme that publishers do not have to join, and can decline to co-operate with in individual cases. It has never had a single case!

As the previous week’s baseless attacks on Jeremy Corbyn showed, the wealthy corporate right-wing press is moving further away from popular opinion, while new small-scale media struggle to offer a better service to the public. The government has declared it stands firmly with the old press barons and that is bad news for everyone.
To them that hath it shall be it given ...

THE GOVERNMENT is riding to the rescue of the discredited commercial press as it struggles to maintain profits in the face of lost sales and revenue.

The Prime Minister announced a review of the “sustainability of our national and local press”, after heavy lobbying from the industry. It is likely to lead to measures that tax or raise levies from the internet giants that make free use of material from old media, to subsidise those media rather than invest in the new digital news media that are struggling.

Theresa May warned that: “When trusted and credible news sources decline, we can become vulnerable to news which is untrustworthy.” She said the review would consider whether “the creators of content are getting their fair share of the advertisement revenue” from the articles they produced.

The new culture secretary Matt Hancock said: “A key focus of the review will be the local and regional press, who face an uncertain future. Also within the review’s remit will be an examination of how data created or owned by news publications is collected and distributed by online platforms.”

Commentator Roy Greenslade summed it up in the Guardian: “Her message is: forget phone-hacking, forget press misbehaviour, let’s bring Silicon Valley to heel”.

Hacking, forget press misbehaviour, let’s bring Silicon Valley to heel.”

There is no doubt about the pitiful state to which the Big Media groups have reduced Britain’s local and regional press. But with all the cuts they have made they are still highly profitable, while new small-scale independent media – most of them online but some in print as well – are desperately underfunded.

Many of them are registered with the independent regulator IMPRESS, whose director Jonathan Heawood said: “It could be the rebirth of the local newspaper if we work out how to help the new business models thrive in the long run, not prop up the old ones.”

Since 2005 more than 200 local papers have closed in the UK and the number of regional journalists has halved, to around 6,500, with staff cuts, centralised newsrooms, sub-editing and printers relocated miles from local communities.

The newspaper trade body, the News Media Association (NMA), has long complained about the rise of digital news. It says that Google and Facebook are stealing their stories, paying nothing in return.

They also attack the BBC, especially its news website, which the NMA says “risks damaging the local press sector, which is currently in transition to a sustainable digital world”.

Last year the BBC went into co-operation with the NMA to launch a government-sponsored Local News Partnership Scheme. The object was to reduce the widely acknowledged “democratic deficit” in local reporting.

Local courts and councils are no longer being covered because the big newspaper groups have cut staffing to such low levels that there is no-one to do it. So the BBC allowed £8 million of its licence fee income to be used to pay 150 “democracy reporters” working around the country. There is no shortage of publications that could use this help, but virtually all have been allocated to the big groups’ titles, and none to new micro-locals.

The scheme also includes a shared data unit where local reporters can learn new skills, and access BBC News video and audio material. Of the 144 reporters designated so far, the biggest regional group Trinity Mirror was awarded 64, the second biggest, the US-owned Newsquest, has 37, and the third, Johnston Press, 30.

Julian Petley, former chair of the CPBF, wrote on The Conversation blog: “It all suggests that the outcome of the review is largely a foregone conclusion, and one that will simply benefit the press barons to whom the government, like all its predecessors, is permanently in hock.”

... But to those that hath not ...

ALAN SLINGSBY of the Brixton Blog and Brixton Bugle in south London tells how the needy missed out while the BBC subsidised the big groups.

HYPERLOCAL journalists were briefly excited when the BBC announced its Local News Partnership designed to create 150 new journalism jobs.

But in this scheme forced on it by government, the BBC has worked almost exclusively with the News Media Association, a private company created by the 2014 merger of two employer organisations, the Newspaper Society and the Newspaper Publishers Association.

The NMA website home page does not mention journalism, but says it will “promote the efficacy of newsbrands in all their forms as news and marketing media” and be a source of best practice for commercial, marketing and technical issues.

Sean Kelly of NeighbourNet Ltd, which provides software and hosting to nine local news websites in London, asked the BBC about being part of the scheme and obtaining one of its “local democracy” reporters.

All of the NeighbourNet tenders were rejected. Initially, the BBC said that it was because we were a franchise business,” Sean Kelly reports. “When we pointed out that we were not, they said it was because we should have filled in individual applications for each title.

“We pointed out that we filled in a single application because the BBC told us to do so. No reply.”

NeighbourNet affiliates will not even be allowed access to the Local News Partnership “news hub” that will allow 700 “approved” organisations to use BBC video and audio.

The approved list is a litany of
IN COME FREE REPORTERS OUT GO OLD STAFF

THE RAPACIOUS Trinity Mirror group (TM) showed how it will use any subsidy it receives by sacking 49 journalists the same month that it took 63 free ones from the BBC-funded Local News Partnership scheme.

TM is Britain’s biggest overall biggest newspaper publisher with more than 200 titles – Murdoch has only national papers – and has just bought the Express group. It has been ruthlessly cutting back its staff for 15 years, and has taken the opportunity of the partnership to sack some more.

National Union of Journalists organiser for the North of England Chris Morley said: “Trinity Mirror bragged that it was a ‘very profitable’ company and paid £127 million for the Express.

“Shareholders are being handsomely rewarded with a 6.4 per cent dividend and the company has effortlessly stumped up £10 million to smooth over the hacking scandal victims. And now it has gobbled up the lion’s share of £8 million that has been cut from the BBC’s budget for journalism to provide local democracy reporters.

“Yet all the time, senior managers have been plotting these huge numbers of job cuts that will have a major impact on already badly weakened newsrooms.”

Also “approved” is Cool FM in Northern Ireland, owned by Bauer Media, Europe’s largest privately owned media group. It will also benefit from BBC services. Its website promises “the perfect mix of music combined with witty, warm-hearted locally relevant banter as well as life’s essential news and market specific traffic updates and weather”.

Of organisations that will get BBC reporters, only the Hackney Citizen, whose owner also publishes the East End Citizen, and Lincoln-based online business publisher Stonebow Media appear in any way to match the hyperlocal tag.

The fight goes on to the end

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THE BIG Media corporations were manoeuvring around Sky TV as Free Press went to press, with the US cable TV giant Comcast launching a surprise bid to buy the network from under the noses of its Murdoch and Disney rivals.

The takeover battle started in 2016 with the bid by 21st Century Fox to scoop up the 61 per cent that the Murdochs do not already own, which will be stuck in the UK regulatory machine until May at the earliest.

In January the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) released a provisional finding that the buy-up would be against the public interest, giving the Murdochs too much media power.

By then the Murdochs had agreed to sell their Sky stake, with other Fox interests, to the US entertainment giant Disney Corporation.

This complicated things not least because the US regulatory process would last over a year, but if that takeover succeeded there would be none of the problems that the Murdochs face in the UK.

The CMA had to continue with its scrutiny of the Fox bid, since the takeover might not happen. So the CPBF fought on with its crowdfunding appeal (last issue) run until March 13 but supporters can still donate to the campaign.

While the CMA ruled against the Sky bid as a threat to media plurality, it did, like the media regulator Ofcom in the previous round of consideration, give it the green light in terms of commitment to broadcasting standards.

As before, it was astounding to think that the Murdochs with their record might be committed to the kind of standards that UK broadcasters have to comply with, so the CPBF again put in a protest, urging the CMA to look at that question again.

Ofcom’s earlier approval had been overturned, to the surprise of many, by the then culture secretary Karen Bradley, and we are looking to her successor Matt Hancock to do the same.

Meanwhile the Murdochs were attempting to turn the decision to their advantage, making offers of “remedies” to safeguard the supposed independence of Sky News, which is the biggest problem with the takeover. With their dominant newspapers and radio news interests – not to mention the way they abuse these media – nobody can allow the Murdochs to control the news.

So in February Fox offered to separate off Sky News from the rest of the company, to be independently run but funded for ten years. This was similar to the offer the Murdochs had made in 2011 when they first bid to buy up Sky – the bid that collapsed with the outbreak of the phone-hacking scandal.

Then came the thunderbolt from Comcast, to buy outright just Sky and none of Fox’s other interests.

The price they offered shareholders – £12.50 a share, compared with Fox’s £10.75 – was so high that the share price shot up to £13.30.

There’s so much money to be made in Sky that, who knows, there could even be further bids – and further complications.

Of the current rivals, Disney owns the US TV network ABC and Comcast owns NBC. Last year the third big network, CBS, owned by Sony, was also said to be interested.

Let the Big Media bullies fight it out. Whatever they do, the CPBF will carry on campaigning. Please donate to the crowdfund.
Desperate to destroy the Labour Party’s revival, the right-wing national press launched a mindless red-baiting attack in February. They just don’t get it, says TIM GOPSILL

And they call Corbyn a dinosaur!

If anything is ‘fake news’ these stories must qualify, as deliberate and conscious lies

WE KNEW the way the world was going from last year’s election campaign. There were two murderous terror atrocities, in Manchester and London, and a heightened state of public apprehension.

The day before the vote, the Daily Mail and the Sun both filled their front pages – and in the Mail’s case 12 pages inside – with attacks on Jeremy Corbyn over his supposed support for terrorism.

The Mail’s headline over photos of Corbyn, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott, was: APOLOGISTS OF CORBYN AND THE COMMIE SPY, brandishing the fantasies of a minor Czech intelligence functionary of the 1980s, as if they had unearthed a top-secret plot.

Out came the brigade of old Soviet-bashing commentators like Dominic Sandbrook in the Mail: “The useful idiot Jeremy Corbyn’s assignations with a secret agent were part of the gullible British Left’s love affair with a totalitarian Russian regime that murdered millions”. The Times had Edward Lucas with “Corbyn’s sickening support of Soviet empire”.

In the late 20th century many people on the left had come across these characters. In the Soviet bloc system Czech intelligence was assigned the task of spying on the UK. Its agents would cultivate the British Left and send reports back to Prague that inevitably exaggerated the significance of the material they managed to gather. They enjoyed life in the west and needed to justify their presence here.

At the time the British left was infiltrated and spied on rather more seriously by MI5, But MI5 was surreptitious, while the eastern Europeans – there were Russians around as well – were open, often comradely and convivial people.

Everyone hated the Cold War and welcomed contact with activists from the east.

In 1990 we were officially told that the Cold War was over and for 20 years people believed it. Now everyone can see that American and Russian warmongers still see benefits for themselves in cranking up militaristic confrontations.

And the right-wing press, facing an uncertain future in the digital world, can relapse into the familiar comforts of brainless red-bashing. For people who remember the tabloid press in their Thatcherite pomp of the 1980s the recent stories about Momentum “thugs” supposedly terrorising the Blairite Claire Kober and Haringey council have an almost nostalgic twang.

Just as with the “baa baa green sheep” fictions of those times – when the papers made up ridiculous stories about Labour councils – the Sun, the Mail and the rest know perfectly well that allegations that Corbyn was a communist spy are not true.

If anything is “fake news” then all these stories qualify as deliberate and conscious lies.

For one thing, Corbyn was among those on the left that supported the rising opposition to the dictatorship of the Communist regimes. In 1989, when the Tory press would have him selling state secrets to the USSR, he signed a Parliamentary motion saying: “This house welcomes the magnificent achievements of brilliant British journalists and MI5 agents in bringing to light the truth that the Soviet empire is an enemy of freedom, which is what the west said throughout the Cold War.”

Now the press’s rationale, if you asked, would be that press freedom entitles them to print what they like and anyone who challenges them is an enemy of freedom, which is what the west said throughout the Cold War.

It has been widely pointed out that their real intention in attacking Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters is to defend themselves from the
popular clamour to call them to account. There were calls for the long-promised and now abandoned resumption of the Leveson Inquiry into their criminal conduct, for a tougher regime of self-regulation, and for laws to curtail the extent of ownership by Big Media corporations.

Jeremy Corbyn articulated these aspirations – which have long been advocated by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom – in his campaign video in response to the stories. He began by making fun of them:

“In the last few days, The Sun, The Mail, The Telegraph and The Express have all gone a little bit James Bond … They’ve found a former Czechoslovakian spy whose claims are increasingly wild and entirely false …”

He ended: “Well, we’ve got news for them: change is coming”. Despite intoning this with a rather uncharacteristic air of menace, he did not mean that Labour is going to trample on the free press, as he also said: “A free press is essential for democracy and we don’t want to close it down, we want to open it up.”

He meant that the change is happening anyway. People are turning away from the Tory press. Their sales have halved this century. It’s not just technology that threatens them, nor the shifting advertising market, but a changing world.

The left-wing Labour Party network Momentum has said that its membership shoots up every time the right-wing papers attack. It reported that 1,800 new members joined in February, 50 per cent more than normal.

National co-ordinator Laura Parker said: “The fact that attacks by the right-wing press have actually increased support for Momentum shows how low they have sunk in the eyes of the public. Being hated by the Daily Mail has become a seal of approval.”

The movement that propelled Corbyn to the Labour leadership is the clearest possible indicator of the change, but the right-wing press can’t see it. Indeed, they call Corbyn old-fashioned, a political throwback.

But it is they that are the dinosaurs, doomed, beached and sinking in the political climate change.

And yes, on the weekend after their Corbyn stories, Labour’s ratings went up, again, by 1 to 2 percent in the various polls.

THE BBC should be run for the people

THE BBC must be truly independent of government and made accountable to the public instead. This is the conclusion of a study by the Media Reform Coalition, of which the CPBF is a member.

To ensure this, the members of the BBC Board should be directly elected by licence fee payers and BBC staff, says the study, produced by a group convened by sociologist Tom Mills, the author of last year’s ground-breaking book The BBC: Myth of a Public Service.

REGULATION

The corporation should be supervised by a new, independent, non-market, regulator, acting solely in the public interest, which would also set the level of the licence fee.

FUNDING

The licence fee system should be maintained but based on internet access rather than possession of a TV. All households would pay it via their internet service provider.

DIRECTION

The BBC must move away from the present approach of “market failure”, in which it is expected to provide only what the market will not, to a positive one in which public and democratic programme making, to rigorous professional standards, can improve the range of the whole media.

DECENTRALISATION

A system of localised, democratic management and commissioning should be established, with national and regional boards elected by staff and local licence fee payers.

A DIGITAL PUBLIC PLATFORM

The BBC should provide a shared space free from commercial imperatives. Data collected via its sign-in services should not be geared towards the BBC’s public purposes, with licence fee payers able to adjust the algorithms according to their personal preferences.

All BBC content should be freely available in perpetuity. Radio programmes should be freely available indefinitely, as should the majority of TV news and current affairs programming.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ensuring adequate diversity will require complete transparency about the makeup of the workforce, publishing equality monitoring data at the programme and production level for all producers of BBC content.

The BBC must re-establish itself as a provider of expertise for industry professionals, targeting under-represented and marginalised groups in its training.

At least half of board members should be women, and minority groups should be guaranteed adequate representation.

COMMISSIONING AND PROGRAMME MAKING

The process of hiving off production into separate competitive companies must be reversed, with in-house production guarantees restored, to ensure the BBC remains a public source of independent programme making and a provider of training and expertise.

Strict stipulations should be introduced into commissioning to ensure adequate diversity within workforces.

When programmes are externally commissioned, they should be sourced from smaller, independent producers rather than big international companies. A proportion of funding should be earmarked to support the development of alternative models of ownership in the media industry such as cooperatives.

A proportion of regional programme commissioning, meanwhile, should also be allocated to audience-led commissioning by panels, selected by lot and paid modestly for their time, or by voting facilitated by the BBC’s digital platforms. Programmes would also have to satisfy the BBC’s policies on diversity and inclusion, with a minimum proportion of news and current affairs programming.
Millions of missing messages

BOSSES AT News Group Newspapers (NGN), the Murdoch subsidiary company that owned the Sun and the News Of The World until the latter closed in 2011, engaged in a massive and illegal cover-up of the crimes of phone-hacking and bribery that flourished in their Wapping offices throughout the 2000s.

As well as the lies that were told – with the collaboration of the Metropolitan Police and the Press Complaints Commission – there was a systematic programme for the deletion of well over 20 million emails, ordered by chief executive Rebekah Brooks.

She was prosecuted and sensationally acquitted of phone hacking and paying police officers in 2014, but documents quoted in the claim presented to the High Court by lawyers for the 50-plus claimants allege that she closely directed the cover-up.

Most of these allegations are not formally denied. The defence document submitted to the court states that nearly all are neither admitted nor denied, but merely “not admitted”.

The judge has required NGN to explain these non-admissions since court rules do not allow “bare” non-admissions.

These are some of the allegations in the claim document:

FROM 2008 onwards, NGN was well aware that it was under a legal obligation to preserve all documents or evidence relevant to allegations of voicemail interception or related unlawful information gathering activities because of civil claims arising from them; later police enquiries reinforced the obligation.

Yet millions of emails were systematically deleted through the operation of an “email deletion policy”.

The policy, dated November 2009, was intended, the pleadings say, to eliminate in a consistent manner (subject to compliance with legal and regulatory requirements) emails that could be unhelpful in the context of future litigation.

Throughout 2010, according to the claim, Brooks sent a series of increasingly concerned emails about the policy:

How come we still haven’t done the email deletion policy discussed and approved six months ago? (29 July 2010)

Everyone needs to know that anything before January 2010 will not be kept (August 2010)

She decreed that there should be “no company-wide comms”, that no written communication containing her instructions about this email deletion policy should be recorded in a document disseminated throughout NGN. Andrew Hickey (chief investigating officer) sent an email to (chief legal officer) John Chapman saying that Rebekah Brooks was adamant on Jan 2010 and has discussed it with JRM [James Murdoch] who wants to draw a line under Wapping and pre 2010.

On September 9 2010 the IT department was informed that the data deletion work needs to be done by today so please align a resource … [due to] a senior NI management requirement to delete this data as quickly as possible.

In that month around 4.5 million emails for the period up to the end of 2004 were deleted from the system without any back-up being made.

This was after the company had received a letter of claim from actor Sienna Miller specifying the preservation of documents.

In January 2011 and February 2011 all remaining pre-January 2010 emails were to be deleted – approximately 20 million according to the document. This was after the police had begun Operation Weeting to investigate the phone hacking, and more civil claims had been launched as well.

NGN deliberately did not mention the deletion of millions of emails to the police, who only discovered in May or June 2011, by which time it was too late to recover the majority of them.

It turned out that a consultant it firm employed by NGN called Essential Computing had back-up tapes as part of its routine practices – not at the request of NGN.
THE MIRROR OWNS UP

ACTOR HUGH Grant has settled his case over phone-hacking against Mirror Group Newspapers in return for an apology, some admissions and an undisclosed six-figure sum.

The publisher of the Daily and Sunday Mirror and Sunday People accepted the illegal actions it had taken against the actor “should never have happened and were morally wrong.”

It admitted that “a number of its senior employees, including executives, ‘Senior employees, including executives, editors and journalists, condoned, encouraged or actively turned a blind eye to the widespread culture of unlawful information gathering’ editors and journalists, condoned, encouraged or actively turned a blind eye to the widespread culture of unlawful information gathering activities at all three of its newspapers for many years and actively sought to conceal its wrongdoing from its many victims of intrusion”.

Hugh Grant has donated the payment to the campaign group Hacked Off. He said: “This newspaper group has misled the public and its shareholders for many years and it has let down its readers and its hard-working journalists. “Those journalists have paid the price for the wrongdoing of executives who have left with large pay-offs and share options.”

ELETE

(roughly 40) cases for a trial date in September. Because the “generic” evidence in all of them is substantially the same the High Court has until now selected a handful of “test cases”, intended to settle the main issues of liability, but every one has been bought off.

January’s last-minute deal was attacked by the judge, who complained that, after years of work by the courts and the reserving of precious court time, the claimants in the queue had been deprived of a determination of the central issues.

The Murdochs seem prepared to fork out endless millions to stop the evidence against them coming out in court. The settlements protect them from a public airing of the crimes they and their papers committed – evidence that could be fatally damaging as their bid to take over the whole of Sky TV grinds its way through the regulatory process.

Settlements happen because if a claimant fails to beat a previous offer when the judge makes an award of damages, he or she is liable for both sides’ costs of the trial which would bankrupt them. The judge said at the latest hearing he would consider finding a way to protect claimants from such a costs penalty if the interests of justice required a trial of the “generic issues.”

The way the Murdochs run their companies – their “corporate governance” in the regulators’ jargon – has become a central question since the previous culture secretary Karen Bradley referred the takeover to the Competition and Markets Authority on the question of their commitment to the high broadcasting standards required for a public service licence in the UK.

Some of this evidence can now be published, because the judge had ordered both parties – with the claimants all acting as one – to produce amended claims and defences, and these were presented in open court at the February 5 case management hearing.
Leveson says that ‘inquiry should go on’

LORD JUSTICE Leveson wanted to go ahead with Part 2 of his inquiry, a letter he sent the government has revealed.

Leveson wrote that phone hacking had proved to be more widespread than was known at the time of the first stage of his inquiry. The evidence he heard was “far from complete … neither Part 1 nor the criminal trials have provided answers to ‘who did what to whom’;” Such investigations were the precise purpose of Part 2.

The government was obliged by the Inquiries Act to consult him before taking the decision on the future of his inquiry. He responded on January 23 but his letter was not released until after the announcement on March 1. He wrote: “There has been no investigation of corporate governance and management failures at News International and other newspapers” and added that Part 2 could deal with the question as to whether new media outlets should be subject to greater regulation.

He concluded: “I have no doubt that there is still a legitimate expectation on behalf of the public and, in particular, the alleged victims of phone hacking and other unlawful conduct, that there will be a full public examination of the circumstances that allowed that behaviour to develop and unlawful conduct, that there will be a full public examination of the circumstances that allowed that behaviour to develop and clear reassurances that nothing of the same scale could occur again: that is what they were promised”.

How to deal with the ‘IPSO problem’?

THE NATIONAL papers’ tame self-regulator IPSO is facing two legal challenges to its rulings, one of which exonerated an offensive article by a member of IPSO’s board.

Last October IPSO dismissed a complaint over a column about refugees by Trevor Kavanagh in the Sun that referred to “the Muslim problem”. He was a member of IPSO’s board at the time.

IPSO said he “was entitled to speculate on the validity of the status of refugees … and the reference to ‘a million more so-called refugees’ was clearly presented as his speculation”. The complaint was brought by equality trainer Rachel Elgy, who is seeking a judicial review of the decision.

A similar case has been launched by Jonathan Coulter over IPSO’s reports in the Times and Sunday Times of a meeting on the centenary of the Balfour Declaration in the House of Lords. Both have crowdfunded their cases.

The High Court has agreed to take the Coulter case. He is backed by the campaign group Hacked Off. Executive director Evan Harris said: “This case will set a vital precedent; he is fighting on grounds similar to those of many others whose valid complaints have been rejected. IPSO can be exposed as a fraud in court.”

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Yet in all the flood of anti-Muslim commentary in the press, only one complaint was successful from 8,148 that specifically cited clause 12 of the Editors’ Code of Conduct.

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