

Letter to the Editor's Code of Practice Committee for the Purposes of the Public Consultation

2017-01-19

As far as I'm concerned the code needs to be entirely produced by a group of independents, based on input from all sectors of life, with the overriding aim of ensuring that the press as a whole effectively and fairly meets its most important reason for existence; that is to uphold our democracy. It also must also highlight that the money making aim of press organisations is in direct conflict with this requirement. Because of this latter point it is impossible for editors to ensure press organisations are effective in this main goal.

As an example of the destruction of our democracy that is actually being helped along by our press, let alone lack of effectiveness, is the Brexit charade. The fact is that the British press in general took sound-bites from politicians and sensationalised and advertised them. That is all they did, when they should have been arguing with the claims of all politicians. They should have been analysing all the issues and informing the public. They did not do this. This is nothing to do with whether I was for or against Brexit. I found no useful info from the press, only sound-bites repeated. I myself came across a number of pertinent issues that no press addressed. For example the impact of Brexit on our direct competition with Germany and the power that Germany would be given by our exit. I am not speaking of general flag waving issues here; I am speaking of the rise of Frankfurt in financial industry and as an international air hub, the incentives Germany gives to draw international technology companies away from the UK (for which I have first hand experience), etc.

I sent complaints to many press organisations, the press assoc, various papers, BBC, ITV, Ch4 and didn't even get a response. The fact of the matter is that all these organisations are chasing after pennies in profit and the public only pay for sensationalist nonsense, not for information or sober news.

Making profit is perfectly OK, I am not against it. But the press is a pillar of democracy. Without them our democracy is finished, our country will be no better than a tinpot dictatorship and we will become poor while our economic competitors richer. Let alone loss of our rights, loss of legal representation, healthcare and education for all.

I mention all of these big sounding concepts because this is exactly what we are facing without lack of press regulation. In past times business leaders had a sense of duty in their jobs as well as a need for profit. That is now gone, there is only ruthless profit and bending of rules and laws to get ahead. The current regulation is basically managed by the very people that are highly motivated and effective at bending rules and laws to avoid any penalty. For example, Paul Dacre, the very person responsible for a story last month that persecuted one of our judges for being gay. In a story that tried to profit from the sensationalism that implied the three judges that gave a contentious verdict with somehow degenerate people. I complained to the Daily Mail about this article with specific reference to the law and their article and got a response with a wishy-washy attempt at justification and a link to more propaganda they had published. Should a person responsible for such rot be in charge of regulating himself?

Apart from independent code creation with duty to democracy at its heart, it has to be independently policed for the reasons above. I would also support quick financial penalties for every breaching article, no matter how small or unimportant, where justified. Hitting the profit is the only effective method of reminding editors of their duty.

Further, I stipulate a legal separation of news and entertainment with news being in a clearly marked

section (just as advertising is marked but in only one section) with strict limiting of sensationalism (with clear definition). News here including political argument, impartial information on issues being covered, and a certain percentage of every article size (arbitrarily maybe a fifth) to provide balancing arguments and information. An article that does not contain such balance or information, such as comment pieces, can still be provided, just not in the news section.

I am sorry but the press had a chance at self-regulation and for decades they abused that privilege. Now they are actively destroying our democracy and must be stopped.

Regards,

S Patel