



RESPONSE TO PRESS REGULATION PROPOSALS, 2013

The Campaign Against Censorship opposes any statutory control of the Press. None has existed in this country since 1695 and there is no justification for reintroducing it now. Other democracies have freedom of expression guaranteed in their State constitutions.

The scandals of phone hacking and leaking of information by the police are being dealt with adequately under existing criminal law. There are many prosecutions and there have been convictions resulting in imprisonment. The victims' organisation Hacked Off is using the scandal to try to achieve privacy for celebrities through government press control. That cure is worse than the disease. The correct remedy is for Parliament to enact a proper English law defining the right to privacy. (The present right is vaguely prescribed in the Human Rights Act).

The proposed Royal Charter controlling the Press is especially dangerous because it will be promulgated by the Privy Council (i.e. the government) and not by Parliament. It will thus be a diktat that cannot be debated, drafted or amended by elected members of the legislature.

In July 2013, the largest British newspaper and magazine publishers set up the Independent Press Standards Organisation

(IPSO). This is acceptable voluntary self regulation. The publishers have subscribed to a code of conduct with disciplinary sanctions. Compulsory front-page corrections, fines of one million pounds sterling and protection of whistleblower informants can be imposed on members. Smaller publishers (e.g. *Private Eye* and *Tribune*) have exercised their democratic right not to join IPSO and so will be merely subject to adequate existing law e.g. confidentiality, contempt of court, corruption, incitement, libel, official secrets, privacy and race relations. There is no need for additional, authoritarian State sanctions imposed by a Royal Charter.

The Campaign Against Censorship therefore opposes the proposed Charter and joins the other freedom of expression groups doing likewise e.g. Index on Censorship, Libertarian Alliance, National Union of Journalists and the Society for Individual Freedom.

CAC Council, August 2013

Campaign Against Censorship
PO Box 570
Redhill
RH1 2WZ

chair@dlas.org.uk
www.dlas.org.uk