

News Corp

July 17, 2013

The Right Honorable John Whittingdale OBE MP
Chairman, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA

Re: Letter of 10 July 2013

Dear Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of 10 July.

I understand that, given other commitments, the Select Committee is unable to accommodate me with an appearance later this month, or otherwise schedule my appearance before September. The Select Committee may also be concerned about avoiding any possible prejudice to the criminal trials scheduled to start September 9. Given the uncertainty surrounding the schedule, I want to address in writing the concerns you raised about my evidence submitted to the Select Committee in July 2011 and the remarks attributed to me at a meeting with Sun employees in March 2013. I have received five questions on the same subject from Chairman Vaz of the Home Affairs Committee. I would be happy to share my answers to those questions if the Select Committee would find it helpful.

As I told Chairman Vaz, I do not have a tape or even a reliable transcript of the March 2013 meeting. Without the tape, neither I nor the Select Committee can review the full content and context of my remarks. That context is important.

My July 2011 appearance was triggered by revelations of telephone voicemail-interception at News of the World. The focus of my meeting at the Sun in March 2013 was on the Sun employees arrested as part of Operation Elveden, the investigation into payments to police and public officials. The investigation at the Sun, all of the arrests, and the other developments addressed at the March 2013 meeting took place after my appearance before the Select Committee in July 2011.

In July 2011, I committed to “clean up” the problems at News International (now News UK). I have kept that promise, and then some: we installed a completely new management team, promulgated new policies, created a more robust governance structure, and conducted a multi-title review of our publications that was not requested by the Metropolitan Police, costing over sixty five million pounds. And, we proceeded to turn over to the MPS all evidence suggesting possible criminality, leading to dozens of arrests of employees. Lord Justice Leveson acknowledged the “scale and scope” of the material disclosed by the Management Standards Committee, and its role in leading to arrests at the Sun. Leveson Report, pp430. That course of action demonstrated our commitment to compliance with the law, but it also carried a significant human cost.

At the March 2013 meeting, I was confronted with that human cost – first-hand accounts of families frightened and careers destroyed, all as a result of a decision we made to actively cooperate with the authorities in an effort to put things right. The letter read to me at that meeting from a family whose life was forever altered was only a sample of what I had been hearing for months, and it caused me to reflect on the painful path we as a company chose to walk. And yet I also tried to explain at the same meeting that we acted as we did because we were trying to do what was in the best interests of our company and all of its employees. And, we as a company have continued down the path of making things right at News UK, to this very day. While we have in recent months asked the MPS or the Crown Prosecution Service to reconsider requests for assistance that seemed unreasonable or unfair under the circumstances, and we have this week for the first time sought guidance from the Court on a legal issue, we have more than met our commitments. We assembled 23 million documents for review out of archives and produced over a half million documents to the MPS, devoting over 185,000 man hours to this work. We have also responded to and resolved over 1,800 follow up requests from the MPS without need for a court order. As these matters are currently in an advanced stage with trials scheduled to start in six weeks, it was entirely appropriate for our company to seek guidance from the Court, in order to ensure that everyone's legal rights are protected. But no one can reasonably question that we have gone to great lengths to set News UK on the right path, to fairly compensate victims, and to assist the MPS.

Even without a reliable transcript before me, I am sure I made overly emotional comments about the MPS at the March meeting. But the frustration that drove those comments was real, and rooted in the events that have taken place after I appeared before you. This has now gone on for more than two years. Nearly 200 police officers have been involved. They have conducted pre-dawn raids with as many as 14 officers entering journalists' homes in front of terrified families. And most troubling, in many cases the arrests were followed by no charging decision one way or another, for as long as 18 months, leaving lives in limbo. There has been at least one suicide attempt. Other employees have suffered from medical conditions. All of this followed my appearance before the Select Committee. I do not doubt the police's professionalism, but from my layman's perspective, the police approach to these matters since I met with you has in some respects appeared to be disproportionate. I should not have spoken disrespectfully of the police. We all owe a great debt to the MPS for their work each day to protect the public. Still, I share my employees' deep frustration with the length of this process.

Finally, the "reports" that I knew about let alone tolerated payments to police are completely false. When I first heard there was evidence of inappropriate payments in the spring of 2011, I agreed with the decision to seek counsel and then report this information to the MPS, which led to Operation Elveden. Since I appeared before you in July 2011, I have participated in the extensive proceedings before Lord Justice Leveson, and have heard about historic practices at other titles as well as our own and by public officials who solicited payments for tips and stories. Leveson Report, pp431 ("MPS now believes that a number of stories published in the Daily Mirror, the Sunday Mirror, the Daily Star and the Star on Sunday were obtained through such payments").

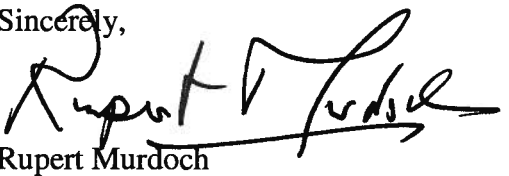
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Our response to this activity has been unambiguous – we were the ones who reported what we found to the police. I do not minimize the wrongs that have gone on in the past at our papers. I remain of the view that our reporters must obey the law – that is why we proceeded to turn over evidence suggesting that they did not – but I also believe that our employees have been singled out for the harshest treatment. I take responsibility for making things right at News UK, but also for supporting our employees who are entitled to the presumption of innocence and to fair treatment by the authorities.

None of us are likely to forget the events leading to my appearance before the Select Committee in July 2011. But my remarks last March were directed at what has happened since then.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information that would be helpful to you and the Select Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rupert Murdoch", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rupert Murdoch