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I am writing to raise some concerns about the current lack of transparency in the development of a new system of press self-regulation and to ask whether there are plans to open the process to public scrutiny and dialogue.

Since Lord Justice Leveson published his report and recommendations on 29th November there has been almost no information about how the industry is responding – beyond Lord Hunt's commitment to have a new system in place by 1st July.

We have not been told who is running the process, who is participating, what concerns newspapers have, what meetings are being held – between media organisations themselves or between media organisations and the government - or what is being discussed at those meetings, or where there are points of dispute with Lord Justice Leveson's findings. Nor has there been any concerted attempt to include or consult with the public. The 'consultation' on the Editors' Code of Practice has hardly been publicised and corresponds only to one specific aspect of the process.

This despite Leveson's criticisms of the previous press proposals for their failure to include the public:

'I find it extraordinary that,' Leveson wrote in his report, 'given the acceptance by Lord Black and the newspaper industry that the current system of press regulation has lost public confidence, they did not regard public views on the matter as of sufficient interest or importance to make any effort to ascertain them. I find it more extraordinary that, having had its attention drawn to this point by the Inquiry, there is still no sign of the industry making any effort to understand public expectations in relation to press standards. This lack of interest in the views of the public may be symptomatic of the approach that the press has consistently taken towards regulation over many decades. It demonstrates the extent to which the press continue to prioritise their own interests, with consideration of the wider public interest only in as much as it applies to the importance of protecting the freedom of the press, and only then to the extent that they can appoint themselves the arbiter of it.'

"It is important to note," the judge wrote, "that the proposal put forward by Lord Black gives no rights of any sort to members of the public". This is why, Leveson said, so many previous systems have failed and why the new one must be built differently. "I have said, many times," he continued, "that any new regulatory system must work for the public and for a system to work for the public it should have the rights and interests of the public at its heart." The proposal put forward by the industry "manifestly fails that test."

With this in mind, I'd be very grateful if you might answer a few questions in order to shed some light on the current process:

- Paul Vickers, Chairman of the 'Industry Implementation Group' was reported as saying that the draft Royal Charter was 'the fruit of two months of intensive talks involving the newspaper and magazine industry and all three main political parties':
 - What is the 'Industry Implementation Group', what is its remit, and who is on it?
 - Will you be publishing details of the 'intensive talks involving the newspaper and magazine industry and all three main political parties'?
 - Did the newspaper and magazine industry request any changes be made to the recognition criteria in the draft Royal Charter before publication?
- Will you be publishing any details of the meetings held by the industry about the development of a new system between December 2012 and February 2013?
- Do you plan to make future industry meetings and proposals for a new system public?
- How do you plan to involve the public in the development of a new system (beyond the limited consultation on the Code)?

It would also be very helpful if you might describe your personal involvement in this process, since this is also not clear.

The press criticises politicians and other institutions for not being transparent, and rightly exposes secret talks and backroom deals. Yet when it comes to press reforms, there is a studied silence and almost complete lack of scrutiny. I hope that this will soon change.

Given that this letter is directly concerned with transparency it will be made public after you have received a copy. I will be sending a similar letter to Lord Hunt asking the same questions.

With best regards,

Martin Moore
Director, Media Standards Trust