

Dear CMA,

Along with many other victims of phone hacking, I am a victim of email hacking (and possibly phone hacking as well, but I cannot prove this) by what was known as News International, run by the Murdoch family. I was a core participant in the Leveson Inquiry, before which I gave evidence.

In my own case, I was working for a charity when my confidential emails were found on the hard drive of a third party who had no right to have access to them. The police found under Operation Tuleta that the person responsible was a former member of army intelligence who was employed by Times Newspapers. However, both Times Newspapers and News International settled my civil claim out of court for a sum I am not allowed to disclose. They also compensated the charity for which I worked. Both newspaper companies denied any responsibility, but the question I ask myself is why would they pay for something they had not done. Under the terms of the settlement I and the charity for which I worked are allowed to say that we feel vindicated by the outcome.

I have since learned that my client, Ian Hirst, who also testified before the Leveson Inquiry, has forced News International and its successor to admit that they did hack his and my emails, and that he has received an apology and also compensation.

I understand that the company that wishes to take control of BskyB, headed by James Murdoch, is seeking to argue that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google increase the plurality of news coverage, thus diluting the Murdoch monopoly.

This is complete nonsense. Such platforms simply redistribute existing news stories, including those that come from Murdoch-dominated sources such as their newsgroup and Fox News. These platforms do not engender news themselves. They are merely aggregators and amplifiers of news.

I am concerned about the increase in so-called fake news, and the role played in that by unscrupulous news “providers”, including the Murdoch empire, and by the accusations that newspaper groups, such as those run by the Murdochs, are able to set the agenda for other broadcast media and influence political results, such as that of the Brexit referendum.

I am just a member of the public, but I am also a journalist’s daughter, and I care deeply about the freedom of the press. I do not believe that increasing monopolies and decreasing plurality of media outlets serves that freedom. I have been concerned by the failure of the Conservative Party, whose own record of servility to the media, and particularly to the Murdoch group (one of Theresa May’s first acts as Prime Minister in visiting America was to meet Rupert Murdoch), is questionable, to protect the genuine public interest in maintaining plurality within the media.

I therefore welcome the CMA’s consultation on the question of whether the Murdoch bid diminishes plurality in press coverage, and its preliminary finding that it does so.

However, I am deeply concerned that the CMA has found that the Murdoch empire is a fit and proper entity to run a news channel, and that its record in other spheres of influence is irrelevant.

In light of my own experience, and that of many others, including the Yeates, the Dowlers, the McCanns, and the Watsons, I do not believe that BskyB should be under the control of any member of the Murdoch family as they are not fit and proper people play a part in news distribution in any form of media or any control over news media in this country, let alone even greater control than they already have.

In Joanna Yeates' case her landlord, Christopher Jefferies, was hounded as a suspect and his reputation ruined despite his complete innocence, her family being completely led astray.

In the case of the Dowlers. their daughter Millie's mobile phone was hacked after her death and her parents were given false hope that she might still be alive.

Jerry and Kate McCann have been hunted as if they killed their own daughter, Maddy, with private diaries published and misreporting on an unforgiveable scale.

Tom and Mary Watson had to endure not only slurs in their teenage daughter's murder – "she asked for it" – but also the suicide of their young son, their only other child, holding a copy of one such an article in his hands.

There are many other examples, but these four are four too many. This was not news, it was defamation, which caused untold hurt. I have met all these people, and seen the damage done with my own eyes. I am just one of many, many victims of lawbreaking and unethical behaviour by Murdoch-controlled organisations. Given the known scale of this wrongdoing, the fact that it all happened while Murdoch family members were in charge, and the fact that the Murdochs have all consistently professed ignorance of what happened on their watch, I believe it is your responsibility now to block that family from increased news media ownership. They have shown, not once but on many occasions, in this country and in the United States, that they cannot run news organisations that do not break the law, and that law-breaking, I remind you, has an intolerable human cost.

How can anyone, especially a body with your responsibilities, possibly think that the people responsible for this misreporting, to put it at its lowest, are responsible enough to run a news channel?

Yours sincerely,

Jane Winter.

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