

# THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW BEST

**T**HERE have been a number of calls for the press to be placed under Ofcom, the statutory media regulatory body.

We will now look at several key figures in the Leveson Inquiry, all of whom have worked closely together at Ofcom and have direct or, through each other, indirect connections to Julia Middleton, David Bell and the Media Standards Trust.

As we have shown, the MST and its off-shoot Hacked Off have been hugely involved in the Leveson Inquiry.

Ofcom is the classic New Labour quango. Costing the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds and staffed with Blairite cronies, it is the apotheosis of the party's obsession with controlling the media generally.

A key figure in its creation is the LSE-educated Ed Richards, who had been controller of corporate strategy for John Birt at the BBC.

He then became senior policy adviser on the media to Tony Blair and helped write the Labour Party manifesto.

At Downing Street Richards worked on the Communications Bill which created Ofcom. He then became Ofcom's senior partner responsible for strategy and development. In 2006 — in one of the most egregious acts of New Labour patronage — he was appointed Ofcom chief executive.

Similar accusations came with the choice of appointments for Ofcom's first board.

'Brown ally gets top media job'. This was the Guardian's headline on the announcement that the New Labour-ennobled peer Lord Currie — described as a 'confidant' of Gordon Brown — had got the job as chairman of Ofcom in 2002.

During Currie's earlier career in academia, his boss at Queen Mary, University of London, was Maurice (now Lord) Peston, a member of Labour's inner sanctum.

According to a Guardian profile, it was Maurice Peston 'who would take Currie directly into the inner Labour circle'. Once there, Currie became 'an informal adviser to the likes of John Smith, Roy Hattersley and Gordon Brown'.

Lord Peston is the father of Robert Peston, BBC business editor, Common Purpose cheerleader and Media Standards Trust founder trustee.

In 2009, Lord Currie gave the Peston lecture, named after Lord Peston. Lord Currie also sat on the board of the constitutional reform lobby group Charter 88, alongside the Common Purpose and MST-linked Helena Kennedy.

Charter 88 was formed as the Left's response to Margaret Thatcher's 1987 election victory.

There are further complex links between former Ofcom colleagues of Lord Currie and the Media Standards Trust/Hacked Off.

Ian Hargreaves is a former Ofcom board member and one of the best-



'Brown's confidant': Lord Currie

## Why are so many figures in the Leveson Inquiry connected to New Labour's favourite media quango Ofcom?



Blair adviser: Ed Richards

# WHAT A VERY SMALL WORLD

connected figures in the liberal Establishment.

A founder with Julia Middleton of the New Labour think-tank Demos, Hargreaves was deputy editor at Sir David Bell's Financial Times (Robert Peston was political editor), editor of the Independent and New Statesman, Director of News and Current Affairs at the BBC and is now Professor of Digital Economy at Cardiff University.

On the Media Standards Trust website he is listed as a 'supporter' of the Hacked Off campaign.

Hargreaves told the inquiry he thought the Press Complaints Commission should be scrapped. And while he said he did not think

Ofcom should regulate the press directly, he suggested it should have a 'light-touch regulatory' role, which would prove a 'backstop statutory power' or an 'invigilating role' to force newspapers to adhere to a code of practice.

In other words, Ofcom would play the role of press enforcer post-Leveson.

Richard Hooper, meanwhile, was deputy chair of Ofcom from 2002-05 and before this worked at the Radio Authority and the BBC. In 2009, he was part of the Media Standards Trust's 'non-partisan' review panel of its shambolic report into press regulation.

Until 2007, he served as an

'Independent Public Appointments Assessor' to the Department of Culture, Media & Sport on Public Appointments — the very body that was later involved in choosing the Leveson assessors.

In November 2011, Richard Hooper was named by Vince Cable as leader of a feasibility study on developing a Digital Copyright Exchange.

The recommendation for this study was put forward by Ian Hargreaves. Small world.

And there in the background is the New Labour peer Baroness Kennedy, who appears on the Common Purpose website as one of Julia Middleton's 'top ten 'inspirational leaders' and is also

interviewed by her in a film discussing 'leadership'.

In the absence of Sir David Bell on Leveson assessor duty and his successor Roger Graef — who has stepped aside while his film company makes a Hugh Grant-fronted documentary on the inquiry — Baroness Kennedy is the 'acting chair' of the Media Standards Trust.

She was a member of the MST's 'non-partisan' review panel for the 2009 report on the FCC.

The peer also sat alongside a third Leveson panel member, Lord Currie, on the pre-New Labour constitutional reform pressure group Charter 88.

What a small world.

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