

## THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW BEST

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public services... Journalists who used to dine with politicians now dine on them.

It seemed what really concerned Mulgan — described as 'the ultimate New Labourite' — was the conservative press's antipathy to the EU, mass immigration and incompetent public services.

There can be little doubt that he was referring to newspapers like The Sun, Express, Mail and Telegraph — papers read by the majority. It is they who were the most critical of New Labour's policies on the EU and mass immigration.

It was they, we can surmise, who provoked Ms Middleton's walls.

COMMON PURPOSE has claimed more than 35,000 people have 'graduated' from its courses in the UK and across the world. As well as firms in the private sector, government departments, local authorities, quangos, charities and police forces have all sent staff on Common Purpose's leadership programmes. A week long '20:20' course in advanced leadership costs almost £5,000.

Common Purpose 'alumni' are encouraged to network and assist each other, though a full list of their identities is not publicly available.

They have a private website, which requires a password to log in. Members who disclose information from this site face expulsion. Meetings are held under the so-called Chatham House rules, under which no one can be quoted by name. So much for the 'transparency' in public life that is being called for by the Media Standards Trust and Hacked Off lobbyists.

However, the public area of the Common Purpose website, Middleton's book Beyond Authority and other sources do reveal the identity of a number of prominent officials, 'graduates', course lecturers or those associates whom Middleton considers to be her 'inspirational leaders'.

Sir Bob Kerslake, the recently appointed head of the Home Civil Service and Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government, is a Common Purpose graduate, according to the organisation's website. Lord Patten, chairman of the BBC Trust, has a full-page profile on the Common Purpose International website's 'who we are' section.

Jon Williams, the BBC's World News Editor since 2006, is also a graduate of Common Purpose London.

Professor Richard Sambrook, who was the BBC's Head of News and director of the World Service, is quoted praising Common Purpose on the website. He spoke at a Common Purpose event but has denied being otherwise involved.

The BBC has told the Mail that, in a five-year period, it spent more than £126,000 on Common Purpose courses. But it is Leveson assessor Lord Currie who (as we show later in fuller detail) illustrates the incestuous relationships that intertwine throughout this Inquiry.

He was the first chairman of the media regulator Ofcom, where former colleagues there included the ex-BBC executive Richard Hooper. Mr Hooper was a member of a review panel for Sir David Bell's Media Standards Trust, while fellow Ofcom board member Ian Hargreaves was another founder of Labour think-tank Demos along with Julia Middleton. Hargreaves is also now a Hacked Off supporter and Leveson witness.

During Currie's tenure, Ofcom sent members of its staff on Common Purpose courses, although he is not personally a member of Common Purpose.

Another Common Purpose luminary is Chris Bryant MP — exposed by the press for posing in his underpants on internet dating sites. Bryant, who has led the charge against Rupert Murdoch in the Commons and was a Leveson witness, was Common Purpose's London manager for two years.

Among the senior police officers who are also Common Purpose graduates is Cressida Dick, who was savaged by the press for her leading role in the 2005 shooting of the innocent Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes in a London Underground carriage.

It was Assistant Commissioner Dick who personally chose Deputy Assistant Commissioner Sue Akers to head the investigation into phone hacking and payments to police at News International.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Akers was in charge of the child protection team in Islington when the Evening Standard exposed a long-standing paedophile sex ring in the borough's children's homes.

Ms Akers was also in charge of the Met's North West protection team in the months leading up to the death of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié, who was tortured and murdered by her guardians. This episode, which again triggered a firestorm of media criticism and resulted in a public inquiry, led to her receiving 'words of advice' — the

# How they 'broke the law' to smear their critics

## PULLING THE LEVERS OF POWER

SO WHAT, exactly, does Common Purpose believe? Its credo, publicised by a number of companies which have invested in CP courses, is: 'CP programmes produce people who lead beyond their authority and can produce change beyond their direct circle of control'. This is an excellent example of the jargon, generalities and opacity which characterise Beyond Authority, the 2007 book by Common Purpose founder Julia Middleton. The term 'beyond authority' is a

police equivalent of a reprimand. Neither episode figures prominently in her official profiles. Indeed, none of this was mentioned when Ms Akers told the Leveson Inquiry that News International's transgressions could not be defended as being in the public interest — a claim vigorously rebutted by News International's lawyers, who asked how Ms Akers was qualified to define the public interest.

In all, Ms Akers appeared before the Leveson inquiry three times — more than any other witness.

Lord Blair, Cressida Dick's boss at the Met, was another Leveson witness. Under Blair's leadership, the Met spent tens of thousands of pounds on Common Purpose courses. The Met reviewed its training requirements in 2009.

Since the year Blair stepped down (2008-09), the Met says, no money has been spent on Common Purpose courses.

This week, Lord Blair said: 'I support Common Purpose, as do the vast majority of leaders of major private and public organisations'.

One of the most lucrative connections between Common Purpose and the police involves the West Midlands force. Sir Paul Scott-Lee, the former West Midlands Chief Constable — now a consultant — is a Leveson assessor.

Using Freedom of Information requests, the Mail has established that 27 West Midlands officers, including one Assistant Chief Constable, went on Common Purpose courses under Sir Paul's leadership. It appears that the West Midlands

key mantra to Common Purpose which, by its very nature, is elitist. It means that leaders should seek to influence policy or events or even gain control beyond their national areas of responsibility. Middleton encourages: 'Leaders who understand the value of networks which extend far beyond the traditional confines — and, more importantly, know how to lead them.' This philosophy perfectly defines Middleton and Sir David Bell's campaign to change media regulation, as we shall see later.

expenditure on such courses during this period was significantly more than that of the far larger Metropolitan force.

FOR a number of years Common Purpose has attracted the obsessive attention of the more outré internet conspiracy theorists such as David Icke, as well as bloggers on the far Right. This has provided a convenient smokescreen against a more rational investigation.

But a number of credible parties have also sought to discover more about the charity's presence within public bodies. In 2007, for example, Tory MP Philip Davies — concerned at the then New Labour government's apparent close links with the organisation — lodged written questions to a number of secretaries of state about how much their departments had spent on sending civil servants on Common Purpose courses.

The answers, which weren't widely publicised but can be found on official parliamentary records, showed a

total spend over a handful of years of more than £1 million.

Davies was told that the Department of Work and Pensions had spent almost £240,000 in five years, on courses which had 'helped foster valuable partnerships in the local community which can be used to improve the service offered to our customers'. The Ministry of Defence had spent more than £300,000 over the same period.

While Common Purpose could do little about this kind of scrutiny, we now come to perhaps the most serious charge against this body: the suppressing and 'smearing' of individual citizens who had lodged Freedom of Information questions about its activities.

On the spurious basis that FOI legislation was being abused, causing damage to the charity's reputation, Common Purpose compiled a 'blacklist' of individuals concerned. Common Purpose officials sent private, personal details of these people to public bodies around the country, with the warning that new FOI requests about the charity from those listed should be treated as 'vexatious'.

In other words, Common Purpose tried to block the legal rights of those individuals and prevent their freedom of expression.

The privacy watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), investigated the affair, following complaints by five of those on the blacklist.

In response to a Freedom of Information request from this newspaper, a spokeswoman for the ICO said: 'As far as we are aware, 18 individuals had their personal details disclosed by Common Purpose by way of the list provided to various public bodies.'

She said these details could 'contain their name, and if known, also their address and/or phone number'.

In late 2009, the ICO ruled that Common Purpose was 'unlikely to have complied with provisions in the Data Protection Act 1998 on

## Blunders over a child sex scandal and a police chief with no love for the press



No friend of the press: Sue Akers

processing data'. Their spokeswoman confirmed to the Mail: 'In this case, the Act was probably breached'.

The ICO decided not to take 'further action' against Common Purpose 'after the charity confirmed that it no longer distributed the list' and Julia Middleton issued a statement in which she said: 'As an organisation we made a genuine mistake in this instance. But it was in a very rapidly changing legal context.'

Now let's put this mitigation into the context of the Leveson Inquiry and those Common Purpose-linked organisations, the Media Standards Trust and Hacked Off.

Operation Motorman was a 2005 investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office into alleged breaches of the Data Protection Act by virtually all newspapers including the Mail and other media organisations, who had used a Hampshire private detective agency to obtain anything from addresses and phone numbers to, in some instances, licence plate owners and criminal records.

This was a time when the full implications of the Act were by no means clear. No journalist was ever prosecuted as a result of Motorman.

But Hacked Off and the Media Standards Trust have pushed ever harder for the Motorman files to be made public, and individual journalists named.

One is minded of Middleton's explanation that Common Purpose had erred because of 'a very rapidly changing legal context'. Yet the charity's own data protection breaches were committed a full five years after Operation Motorman.

This episode provides a telling insight into the 'don't do as we do but do as we say' mindset of Common Purpose's leadership.

And yet who is the ultra-busy assessor helping Lord Justice Leveson write his report that could shape the future of the hitherto free press and the right to freedom of expression? Common Purpose trustee and former chairman Sir David Bell, creator of the Media Standards Trust and supporter of Hacked Off.

In his declaration of interests to the Inquiry, Bell explains away the blacklist episode like this: 'Common Purpose has had several dealings in the past few years with the ICO in connection with comments that have been made repeatedly about it on the web, without, in Common Purpose's view, any foundation at all'.

With what can only be described as rank disingenuousness, there is no

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