

BYOND Authority, the book written by Common Purpose and Media Standard Trust founder Julia Middleton setting out her leadership ethos, contains several instructive passages about the 'long games' and other strategies she advocates for success.

In a chapter which begins 'So what of conspiring? The "dark arts"', Middleton quotes approvingly and at length one Doug Miller.

He tells her: 'You start with clear and defined objectives... Then you establish what the obstacles are... they are usually people. So you have to establish what motivates them, and then decide if you can win them over by the power of the idea.'

'Sometimes, if it gets messy, you might have to run over them, undermine them, go around them or discredit them. As a last resort, you consider bullying them, or buying them off.'

Middleton and Sir David Bell, respectively chief executive and a trustee and former chairman of Common Purpose, state they are simply striving for a more accountable press.

More transparency. More truth. At the launch of Hacked Off, its co-founder Dr Martin Moore, also director of Middleton and Bell's Media Standards Trust, said that without a public inquiry the extent of the so-called 'dark arts' of newspapers would not come to light.

And yet, as we shall show, Common Purpose, the Media Standards Trust and Hacked Off are all closely linked to or employ lobby PR firms which the free press have frequently exposed as being practitioners of such 'dark arts' as secretive lobbying and spin.

Take Sovereign Strategy, described by The Guardian as 'Labour's favourite lobbyists', which has close links to party grandees David Miliband, Peter Mandelson and Lord Cunniffingham. It has reportedly donated more than £150,000 to Labour in the past decade.

Lord (Jack) Cunniffingham, a Sovereign Strategy board member from 2002-07, chaired the inaugural meeting of Hacked Off when it was launched at the House of Lords.

Horatio Mortimer works as a 'strategic consultant' for Sovereign Strategy and has provided free support to the victims of phone hacking and their families.

Mortimer is a childhood friend of Formula One chief Max Mosley's late son Alex. Max Mosley is a leading light in Hacked Off and a client of Sovereign Strategy.

Another client of Sovereign was Formula One's Bernie Ecclestone, whose £1 million donation to Labour was subsequently returned because of the controversy surrounding sponsorship of the sport by the tobacco industry.

The 'international communications agency', as it calls itself, was founded and is owned by Alan Donnelly, a former chief steward of Formula One. The HQ has the same Trafalgar Square address as Mosley's charitable arm, the FIA Foundation.

Donnelly lives with Peter Power, an spokesman for and close associate of the former Business Secretary Lord Mandelson.

MEDIA Standards Trust boss Martin Moore said last year: 'We met with Lord Cunniffingham and others, including Alan Donnelly, who said they could help us however we liked.'

Sovereign Strategy has been investigated on a number of occasions by all sections of the press.

In a June 2004 piece about New Labour ministers and corporate consultancies, The Guardian noted: 'One-time Cabinet enforcer Jack Cunniffingham, the loyalists' loyalist, records three remunerated directorships — Brinkburn Associates, Anderson MacGraw and Sovereign Strategy.'

In 2005, The Mail on Sunday reported that the former Labour Health Secretary Alan Milburn had received a payment of up to £10,000, after ceasing to be a Minister, registered in 2004 from 'Sovereign Strategy, a corporate consultancy firm on Tyneside, of which Labour MP "Junkie" Jack Cunniffingham is an associate director — for a speech and follow-up internal round table.'

In May 2005, The Guardian confirmed this when it returned to the subject of former ministers working for lobby companies. It reported that both Milburn and Lewis Moonie, the former Defence Minister, had been 'fast-tracked by a government appointments watchdog to take up work with a Labour-donating lobbying company which ignores a voluntary code of conduct not to pay or employ politicians.'

The Guardian reported that Sovereign Strategy is unusual in not belonging to the lobbyists' professional body, the Association of Professional Political Consultants, which has a code of conduct not to employ or pay any MEP peer or MEP.

The company confirmed it was invested in Common Purpose courses. Is this 'Common Purpose programmes produce people who lead beyond their authority and can produce change beyond their direct circle of control.'

In her book, Middleton encourages 'leaders who understand the value of networks which extend far beyond the traditional confines — and, more importantly, know how to lead them.'



Spin king: FIA boss Max Mosley is at the centre of a complex relationship between lobbyists and the Hacked Off campaign

lady. Such activity, one would have thought, hardly fits in with the Bell/Middleton ethical approach to business activity.

Dark arts and links with the Masters of Spin...

PICTURE: GIGASPORTS/INTERNATIONAL

not a member of the APCC, but said it insisted all paid advice by public officials had to be declared in the relevant registers. (It later claimed to have stopped paying serving politicians in 2007.)

No wonder those behind Sovereign Strategy are no admirers of the press and eager to help rein it in.

MARK LINDER is a Common Purpose trustee. He is also an executive at the leading lobby and PR firm Bell Pottinger. Linder's responsibility is 'sector reputation'. Common Purpose CEO Julia

Middleton blogged about a Common Purpose meeting at which Linder had spoken, eulogising: 'Mark was... a man who knows his stuff and knows how to communicate it. It was a privilege to be there. A reminder of what all talk most of the time.'

The people at Bell Pottinger are the supreme international lobbyists and image makers. In the past, they have worked for supporters of the Chilean tyrant General Pinochet, the Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus (known as 'Europe's last dictator') and the protest-unfriendly leadership of Bahrain. They even 'advised' Asma Assad, Syrian's first

lady. Such activity, one would have thought, hardly fits in with the Bell/Middleton ethical approach to business activity.

FOOTNOTE: One of the recommendations of Common Purpose's Media Standards Trust is that any new press regulation body should consider co-ordinated 'third party' complaints. Reluctant to become embroiled in political, ideological or commercial disputes, the PCP usually only dealt with complaints by individuals — not third party organisations. The Media Standards Trust recommendation would, if acted upon, clearly be a huge boost to the lobbyists and 'dark arts' practitioners.

you are anti-democratic. Indeed, read Middleton's Beyond Authority and you will know not to question the legitimacy of these self-appointed bodies with their self-selecting conclusions. Do not accuse its leaders of being 'busy-bodies'.

If you do that, then — like Britain's true and unfettered press — you are simply part of the problem.

IN response to questions about her working for large corporations, Sue Stapely said: 'I have always undertaken some work on an unpaid basis for ordinary members of the public who either cannot access or afford professional assistance.'

She said of the Newcastle affair: 'It was some time ago. I do not think it would serve any useful purpose to revisit this issue. I do recall the council was strongly divided.'

On its website, Quiller boasts: 'We believe our team has an unrivalled insight into the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties and the inner workings of the Coalition Government.'

LAST year a row erupted after Ms Stapely, working with London-based Quiller Consultants, was recruited to advise council officers on dealing with the media at a cost of nearly £23,000 following an independent inquiry into the killing of Olive Garvie, 93, in a Newcastle care home by fellow resident May Throther, 83...

Deputy Labour leader, Councillor Nick Forbes, who quizzed the Lib Dems about the use of Ms Stapely and Quiller Consultants, said: 'If something has gone wrong, why do the Lib Dems think it is more important to spin a positive reputation for the council than identify the problem and put it right? That is a serious misjudgment.'

But the Lib Dems say the council's former Labour administration also used Quiller Consultants and paid the firm more than £70,000 for advice following a legal case.

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