

# Questions over links of Leveson adviser to press reform lobbyists

Inquiry expert helped found group behind the Hacked Off campaign

By Gordon Rayner, Chief Reporter

A SENIOR adviser to the Leveson Inquiry faces questions about potential conflicts of interest over his links to a lobby group demanding press reform.

Sir David Bell is a co-founder of the Media Standards Trust, the group behind the Hacked Off campaign that has been fronted by the actors Hugh Grant and Steve Coogan.

He is also a trustee and former chairman of Common Purpose, a charity that runs leadership courses and encourages networking among its graduates.

They include Cressida Dick, the Scotland Yard commissioner who appointed Deputy Assistant Commissioner Sue Akers to head the phone-hacking investigation.

This week, Sir David's name was linked to the notorious *Newsnight* report that led to the sacking of Lord McAlpine, as he is a trustee of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the not-for-profit group behind the BBC programme's film.

The bureau gave evidence to the Leveson Inquiry in which it proposed a levy on media organisations to fund groups such as itself, which, it boasted, produced a "gold standard" in journalism.

The bureau is being sued by Lord McAlpine and its future is in doubt after it failed to carry out basic checks in its report for *Newsnight*.

Sir David's links to organisations whose members gave evidence to the Leveson Inquiry were examined by the *Daily Mail*, which said that they raised questions about the "impact this may have had on the objectivity and neutrality of the inquiry itself".

There is no suggestion that Lord Justice Leveson has any links to any of the organisations or that he has been anything other than impartial. But the Leveson Inquiry website describes its six advisers, known as assessors, as having been appointed for their expertise "as well as their complete independence from any interested parties".

Sir David, a former chairman of the *Financial Times*, and his friend Julia Middleton led the Media Standards Trust in 2006. It is a charity that campaigns for "quality, transparency and accountability in news". It spawned the Hacked Off, the lobby group leading the campaign against phone-hacking, which

## Data intrusion Police investigate 142 claims

A Scotland Yard investigation into computer hacking and other "data intrusions" is looking into 142 separate allegations, the Leveson inquiry has been told.

In her final written statement to the inquiry, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Sue Akers, who is leading the investigation into phone hacking, computer hacking and illegal payments, said that 70 "storage devices", such as computer hard drives, were being searched for evidence.

Ms Akers said Operation Tuleta would finish examining the material by the end of January, when alleged victims would be told the results. To date, 17 people have been arrested under the operation, but further arrests could follow.

She also disclosed that 12 officers from Operation Weeting, the investigation into phone hacking, were still working full-time to contact victims whose details were found in the notebooks of Glenn Mulcaire, a private investigator who worked for the *News of the World*. To date, 2,500 people have been contacted and although they represent almost all of those who can be traced, "the investigation is still live and very much ongoing", she said.

Mark Lewis, the solicitor representing hacking victims who include the family of murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, said he had been contacted in the past 10 days by two victims who had only just been told they had been hacked.

Operation Evenden, the investigation into illegal payments to public officials, which has resulted in 52 arrests, is looking into payments by News International, the *Daily Star*, *DAC Akers* said that while *News International*, which owns the *News of the World* and *The Sun*, and the owners of the *Daily Star* had agreed to volunteer evidence of payments, the *Mirror* group had demanded a court order for every alleged payment the police wanted to investigate.

Gordon Rayner

successfully argued for a widening of the Leveson Inquiry to include the conduct of politicians, the police and mobile phone companies.

Hacked Off also successfully lobbied for the Leveson Inquiry to investigate



Sir David Bell has played a role in the Media Standards Trust and Common Purpose

# The woman who knows everyone that matters

By Gordon Rayner, Chief Reporter

SHE has been described as "the best-connected woman you've never heard of". But Julia Middleton, co-founder of the Media Standards Trust and chief executive of Common Purpose, has been dragged into the spotlight because of the groups' links to the Leveson Inquiry.

Three of Lord Justice Leveson's advisers, including her close friend Sir David Bell, have connections to Common Purpose, while the Hacked Off campaign, an offshoot of the Media Standards Trust, helped determine his inquiry's scope.

Miss Middleton's friendships and influence extend to the highest levels of the Civil Service, finance, academia, the Church, education and the BBC, whose members come together at her dinner parties in London.

According to Robert Peston, the BBC's business editor, "almost all her meetings end up with a collective wall about the irresponsibility and excessive power of the media". In her book, *Beyond Authority*, Miss Middleton describes how "a group of peers" told her how to force issues on to the Westminster agenda using "pressure

Julia Middleton is chief executive of Common Purpose, which trains people to 'lead beyond their authority'



from the outside [and] two or three determined fifth columnists on the inside. The stigma from both groups to keep on and on and putting them on the agenda until they eventually had to be discussed."

Common Purpose boasts that its courses "produce people who lead beyond their authority and can produce change beyond their direct circle of control".

She and Sir David Bell now face accusations that they were able to do just that through the Hacked Off campaign.

Yesterday a spokesman for Common Purpose said: "Common Purpose delivers leadership courses in 46 cities around the world. Like most good educational organisations we are impartial, and politically neutral. Julia Middleton was co-founder with Sir David Bell of the Media Standards Trust and remains on the Standards Trust but has no relationship whatsoever with the Bureau of Investigative Journalism."

● A protester who disrupted the Leveson Inquiry to call Tony Blair a "war criminal" was fined £100 yesterday. David Lawley, Wakefield, 49, of Shepperton, Surrey, was found guilty by District Judge Robin McPhee at Haringey magistrates' court of causing harassment, alarm or distress.

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