

IPSO, the press regulator created in the aftermath of the Leveson Inquiry, is not up to task

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/ipso-the-press-regulator-created-in-the-aftermath-of-the-leveson-inquiry-is-not-up-to-task/

1/30/2015

In this article, [Bob Ward](#) explains what led him to lodge a complaint with the Independent Press Standards Organisation, the controversial press regulator that was launched following the Leveson Inquiry into press ethics.



The new Independent Press Standards Organisation ([IPSO](#)) has failed an early test of its credibility by allowing a newspaper to publish inaccurate and misleading information even though it breached the Editors' [Code of Practice](#). IPSO was launched on 8 September 2014 to replace the [Press Complaints Commission](#), which closed after heavy criticism, particularly during the [Leveson Inquiry](#) into the culture, practice and ethics of the Press, of its ineffectiveness.

However, IPSO has been mired in controversy from the outset after several newspapers, including [The Guardian](#), [The Independent](#) and [Financial Times](#), decided not to join it. It has also been attacked by organisations such as the [Media Standards Trust](#) and the campaign group [Hacked Off](#) for lacking independence from the newspapers that it is supposed to regulate. IPSO's [Complaints Committee](#) is chaired by Sir Alan Moses, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, but includes a number of representatives from the newspaper and magazine industry, including Peter Wright, who was Editor of *The Mail on Sunday* between 1998 and 2012.

In September, IPSO took over the process for managing [a complaint](#) I had made to the Press Complaints Commission in July 2014 about an article published in *The Mail on Sunday*. [The article](#) made the false allegation that I had been carrying out a "smear campaign" against Richard Tol, who is [a professor of economics](#) at the University of Sussex and [an advisor](#) to the Global Warming Policy Foundation, the lobby group for climate change 'sceptics'. Professor Tol has carried out a laughable campaign against me, including posting a [fake picture](#) on Twitter with a 'Jedward' hairstyle and describing me as an "attack dog" on his blog, because [I highlighted](#) a number of errors in his work.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was forced to [correct a report](#) last year after I pointed out that Professor Tol had inserted an erroneous claim that "climate change may be beneficial for moderate climate change" based on his flawed analysis. Professor Tol helped to produce a feature by David Rose, a journalist who has been assigned by the editors of *The Mail on Sunday* to write a series of articles about climate change, under the banner 'The Great Green Con', [which have been shown](#) to be inaccurate and misleading. The two-page feature was an attack on me, published on 6 April 2014 under the headline 'Green 'smear campaign' against professor who dared to disown 'sexed up' UN climate dossier'. Rose has been mocked for the inaccuracies in his previous articles which have been based on, for instance, [a fake magazine cover](#) and [a typographic error](#).

The newspaper article attacking me did not dispute that Professor Tol's work contained errors, but argued that I had smeared him because I had written that he was reluctant to make any corrections. Yet the article failed to note that Professor Tol had previously been the subject of controversy because of [a campaign](#) that he had carried out against a fellow economist, Frank Ackerman, who also pointed out mistakes in his work.

Earlier this week, IPSO informed me of [the ruling](#) by its Complaints Committee on the article containing the untrue claim of a smear campaign against Professor Tol. It concluded that the newspaper was permitted to publish the false allegation against me on the grounds that "the claim that the complainant was engaged in a smear campaign against Professor Tol was plainly presented as Professor Tol's characterisation of his activities".

I have told IPSO that I am unhappy with the ruling because it effectively means that newspapers can publish

inaccurate and misleading information, in breach of Section 1(i) of the Editors' Code of Practice, simply by labelling it as a point of view even when the facts disprove it. However, IPSO does not allow appeals against its decisions.

IPSO is also currently considering a complaint I made against [another article](#) by David Rose in *The Mail on Sunday* in September 2014 which wrongly suggested that Arctic sea ice extent has stopped declining. I am not optimistic that my complaint will be upheld, even though the newspaper again breached Section 1(i) of the Editors' Code of Practice.

Update: The fourth paragraph of this article was amended on 5 February 2015 to avoid misinterpretation at the request of John Wellington, the Managing Editor of 'The Mail on Sunday'.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the British Politics and Policy blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please read our [comments policy](#) before posting.

About the Author

Bob Ward is policy and communications director at the [ESRC Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy](#) and the [Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment](#) at London School of Economics and Political Science.

