

## Who Cares who Blinked? First Reactions to the Cross-Party Press Deal

Cameron, Clegg and Miliband are all claiming victory out of the cross-party deal on a **Royal Charter** to implement the recommendations of the Leveson Report. The ways each party's faithful have been claiming that the other side blinked have provided fodder for many an amusing Tweet, but ultimately detract from the real issues. What is important to look at is who is happy with the deal and who is not.

Hacked Off, the victims' advocacy group that was crucial in lobbying the Prime Minister to set up the Leveson Inquiry in the first place, was by all reports involved in the talks that led to the cross-party agreement. The group has now welcomed the deal, though it maintains that the Royal Charter option was not ideal. **Their official statement** commends that the new regulator "will be able to mount effective investigations and where appropriate impose meaningful sanctions."

At least one National Union of Journalists (NUJ) member **complained** that the journalist's union was left out of the cross-party negotiations while editors and Hacked Off representatives were included. The organisation officially gave "a **guarded welcome**" to the agreed framework and its general secretary Michelle Stanistreet said she was pleased that editors were not given veto power over who is appointed to the board of the new regulator. The union will now push for a conscience clause to be included in the new press code of the regulatory body so that its members cannot be pressured into unethical behaviour.

One group decidedly unhappy with the outcome of the cross-party talks is Index on Censorship, which opposes the use of a Royal Charter to establish a press regulator. CEO Kirsty Hughes calls it "a sad day for press freedom in the UK" and **statements** from both her and the Chair of Index's Board of Trustees have lamented the agreement made by the political leaders. However, the group **was pleased** that as part of the deal the so-called 'Leveson Amendment' had been dropped from the proposed changes to the Defamation Bill.

These are only the first few groups with an interest in press reform that have stated their views. Nonetheless, their reactions remind us that in the end the question of whether this solution amounts to "statutory underpinning" is much less important than whether or not it results in a system that publishers will be willing to join – a system that can effectively protect the public, protect journalists and preserve freedom of expression.

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