

News Release

15th May 2012

Global Poverty Campaigner's submission welcomed by Leveson Inquiry

Claims that issues raised have an importance 'several orders of magnitude greater' than 'phone hacking, etc.

Dr David Golding CBE, a global poverty campaigner based in North East England with links to Tearfund, Jubilee Debt Campaign and Stop Climate Chaos (but 'acting in a personal capacity only' in this instance), has made a detailed submission to the Leveson Inquiry into the 'Culture, Practice and Ethics of the Press', entitled '*Old-style/New-style Abuse of Press Freedom*'. Many authoritative sources are cited in the statement.

He says, "I contend that the behaviour of the press relating to some of the great issues of the day not infrequently constitutes *gross professional misconduct*, by involving blatant distortion of the facts and demonstrating utter contempt for the responsibility to provide well informed and balanced treatment.

"I was initially goaded into action by articles in the *Daily Mail* on international aid last December. However, two other examples are also cited in the submission, relating to different papers and dealing with quite different issues, to show that this problem is both long-standing and endemic within large sections of the press.

"I am serious in my claim that the potential damage to human welfare of the abuses to which I draw attention is several orders of magnitude greater than that involved in the matters, such as 'phone hacking, which led to the setting up of the Inquiry. As I show, HIV/AIDS denialism was responsible for the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people. However, millions of lives are lost each year as a result of the cynical disregard shown by developed countries for their oft-repeated promises on international aid and trade justice, and billions are likely to perish under conditions of catastrophic global collapse unless we rise to the challenge of climate change. Much of the press is currently complicit in an almighty gamble – a gamble with the welfare of the whole of humanity, which risks bequeathing to our children and grandchildren a veritable hell on earth."

Notes.

David Golding's submission to the Leveson Inquiry, entitled '*Old-style/New-style Abuse of Press Freedom*' has been welcomed by the Inquiry team and will be published as part of the Inquiry's evidence. David has been informed he will not be required to appear before the Inquiry in person. [*Shame!*]

Further details of the submission, on International Aid Antagonism, HIV/AIDS Denialism and Climate Scepticism are provided below, and the full text of the submission can be found at www.ne-calltoaction.org.uk. [www.ne-calltoaction.org.uk/levesoninquirysubmission.pdf]

Affiliations:

David W. Golding CBE PhD DSc DCL

Associate, Newcastle Institute for Research on Sustainability (NIReS), and Honorary Chaplain, Newcastle University; Development Coordinator, North East CALL TO ACTION on global poverty and climate change (formerly Make Poverty History North East); Board member and Trustee, Jubilee Debt Campaign UK; Campaigns Promoter for Tearfund.

Cont'd

Contact details:

Dr David Golding CBE

(Office) 0191 222 5282

(Mobile) 07 817 637 746

Email, david.golding@ncl.ac.uk

Ridley Building (c/o Marine Science)

Newcastle University

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU

International Aid Antagonism

Under this heading, David Golding says, "Surely, even the slightest concern for fairness, or the smallest concern to help readers come to a balanced judgement on this issue, would have led to the inclusion [by the Daily Mail] of information on the many and manifest benefits provided by British aid, as well as the matters to which objection was taken. In their absence, the impression given, I think mistakenly, was that of sheer spite - of spite, indeed, towards the poorest and most vulnerable people on the planet.

"Besides providing ample evidence of such benefits, I restated one of my constant themes, namely that the real recipients of 'foreign aid' are the rich countries! Unfair trade rules, tax dodges by big corporations, and debt repayments, *each* cost poor countries far more than they get in aid. And those things don't take into account our habit of 'poaching' many of their brightest and best trained people, nor the impacts of climate change, for which we are entirely responsible."

HIV/AIDS Denialism

The submission documents how, back in the 1990s, *The Sunday Times* ran an extended campaign which disputed the mainstream scientific understanding of the causation of AIDS by the virus, HIV. The paper was sharply rebuked by the Editor of the leading science journal, *Nature*, in an article entitled "*New-style abuse of press freedom*" (hence the title of David Golding's submission). The paper's coverage was "*seriously mistaken, and probably disastrous*", according to *Nature*, and 'disaster' is not too strong a word in view of the tragic and unnecessary deaths of more than 300,000 people attributable to HIV/AIDS denialism in South Africa alone. [Although the Sunday Times is currently under different ownership and editorial direction, the item is a salutary example of the abuse of press freedom.]

Climate Scepticism

The submission reserves its sharpest criticism for the Sunday Telegraph's handling of climate change. It recalls Christopher Booker's ridicule of reports of the shrinkage of arctic summer sea ice on the grounds that the ice had expanded again during winter, and states that, "Of course the arctic ice shrinks during the long days of summer and extends its boundaries during the winter when the region is plunged into constant darkness! It has done so since time immemorial and, indeed, it will continue to do so even if, as feared, the North Pole becomes ice-free during the summer within the space of a few decades. Concern is generated not by the fact of this annual cycle, but by the 30% reduction in the area of sea ice during the summer which has been observed over the past 40 years, and its dramatic reduction in thickness (nearly 50%)."

David Golding says: "It beggars belief that a reputable publication, with a circulation in excess of half a million, should open its pages to such material, and likewise, it beggars belief that intelligent people could attach the slightest significance to such absurdities. Unhappily, they do, as this longsuffering campaigner knows only too well!

"My most heart-felt words relate to this topic and I cited the stark warning issued by Professor Ross Garnault, the Australian government's former advisor on climate change, namely that '*The failure of our generation on climate change mitigation would lead to consequences that would haunt humanity until the end of time.*' If our generation does indeed fail in this way, the widespread abuse of press freedom in this connection will bear a heavy responsibility for the ensuing catastrophe – '*a catastrophe*', as Desmond Tutu put it, '*that will exacerbate human suffering to a magnitude that perhaps the world has not yet seen.*'"