

Like vermin they are seldom Isolates

Statement to the Press Council Following the Adjourned Meeting of February 16, 1983 Regarding Goldsmith V Gillard and The Observer

ON THIS OCCASION, contrary to the last, I hope that my evidence will not be interrupted and that there will be no further attempt by you to impose secrecy on these proceedings. I totally reject your claim to a right to conduct the Press Council like a Star Chamber.

At our last meeting, the Editor of The Observer admitted that the articles complained of, written by Mr Michael Gillard and published in The Observer, were untrue. He admitted that the facts as described by me were correct. You then adjourned the meeting.

Since that meeting I have circulated to the members of this Council a statement made in the High Court by The Financial Times in which that newspaper unreservedly apologised to me for publishing an inaccurate and misleading article. Once again Mr Gillard was involved. The Financial Times journalist who wrote the article, a Miss Christine Moir, has since left The Financial Times to join The Observer.

I realise that the Press Council has no alternative but to find in my favour on this complaint, but you will remember, that during our last meeting, I stated that my purpose in bringing this action was not merely to expose Mr Gillard and The Observer. It was to improve the workings of the Press Council. As you know, over the past few years, I have expressed publicly my grave doubts both about the constitution of the Press Council and its capacity to act in a sound, unbiased and effective manner.

Let me give you just one of the specific reasons why I deeply distrust the Press Council. That reason is Mrs Beryl Huffinley, a lay member of your Council since 1978. According to the publication, *The Next Step* (March 1982) which is the organ of the Revolutionary Communist Party, Mrs Huffinley is 'a prominent Communist Party activist'. In October 1981 she attended in Prague the Women's International Federation's World Congress of Women. The Women's International Federation is a Soviet front organisation. She is known to have mingled with the Soviet Trade Union delegation to the United Kingdom in 1981. She is a member of the Soviet front organisation, the World Peace Council, and she is a member of the British Peace Assembly, the British affiliate of the World Peace Council.

By what right do you appoint a prominent Communist Party activist to the Press Council? Let me remind you that your Articles of Constitution state that the two prime objectives of this Council are 'to preserve the established freedom of the British press' and 'to maintain the character of the British Press in accordance with the highest professional and commercial standards'. In Communist countries, the press is no more than the censored, servile and corrupt tool of totalitarian regimes. Are those the standards that Mrs Huffinley advocates for the press in Britain?

It is my experience, which now is extensive, that Communist Party activists do not get appointed to important positions by hazard. They usually receive a helping hand. Like vermin they are seldom isolates.

The Articles of Constitution of the Press Council, Article 4, sub-sections (iii) and (iv) make it quite clear that your so-called independent or lay members are in fact selected from a panel of candidates proposed by the Council itself. They are then chosen by an Appointments Commission. But the members of the Appointments Commission are also chosen by the Chairman and other members of the Press Council. So, despite the use of some cosmetics, these appointments are not independent. They are controlled by the Press Council and by its officers. Who was responsible for the appointment of Mrs Huffinley? Why was there no adequate investigation of Mrs Huffinley before her appointment? Or was there? And if so was it disclosed to the Press Council as a whole? Here is a file of evidence which substantiates all my statements about Mrs Huffinley.

On January 21, 1981, I was invited by the Media Committee of the Conservative Party to give evidence on the infiltration of the media by the far left. My evidence has been made available to you. It describes other grave and perplexing deficiencies in the workings of this Council and it makes specific proposals for reform.

Let Parliament now legislate to establish an honourable and truly independent organisation capable of carrying out the duties so shamefully neglected by this polluted and discredited Council.