

# A massive moment for media and politics in Britain

lse blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/07/08/a-massive-moment-for-media-and-politics-in-britain/

2011-7-8



New media deal?

The 'feral beasts' of the Westminster press corps are quite rightly chasing the political fall-out of the [News of the World closure and the continuing phone-hacking scandal](#). Coulson, Cameron, Brooks, Murdoch – who did what, when and who knew? But the bigger story is the proposed review of the whole relationship between the press and power.

Cynics will say that the Prime Minister is using the idea of a review of British journalism as a way of kicking current problems into long-term long grass. But let's take this at face value. British politicians have traditionally kept well out of commenting on the news media, let alone trying to change it. If you mess with the press you risk getting bitten by the hand that feeds you electoral success (if you see what I mean). But now Murdoch is on the run, politicians have become emboldened. Public opinion really

does seem to be in favour of stopping the worst abuses of press behaviour. So politically, it is now possible.

Of course, journalists fear that they will now be subject to calls for wider restrictions on their legitimate role in holding power to account. We need an unfettered press if we want scandals like MPs' expenses to be told, goes the argument.

Certainly, specific institutions like the Press Complaints Commission now look like they will finally get a proper overhaul and the news media should not panic about that. An industry going through huge technological and economic change, should not fear change in the way it is overseen.

So this is a massive moment in the balance between news media and authority. In a world where power is mediated so intensively and so variously, it is vital that the citizen has the right information and proper forums for open and fair debate. It may well be that a lack of regulation can make that happen, but in practice there will always be a role for rules, too.

Polis looks forward to being at the heart of this debate, starting with our [public meeting on what happens after phone-hacking](#) next Wednesday July 13th at 6.30pm.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science