

Mosley friend tries to get Impress code recognised

David Brown Chief News Correspondent
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A peer seeking to have the state-approved press regulator's code of practice recognised in British law is a close friend of its key financier, Max Mosley.

Lord Skidelsky wants to add Impress to a list of media regulators that would provide protection for journalists accessing personal information to expose wrongdoing.

Under the current proposals for the Data Protection Bill, the public interest exemption would cover journalists only if their reporting abides by the Ofcom code, the BBC editorial guidelines or the Ipsos Editors' Code of Practice.

Impress is largely bankrolled by the family charity of Mr Mosley, the former Formula One boss who became a privacy campaigner after a tabloid newspaper revealed that he had paid to organise an orgy. The charity founded by Mr Mosley in the name of his son, Alexander, whose suicide he blames on the orgy revelations, last year gave £4million to another charity which is the main funder of Impress.

The regulator has only a few smaller titles among its membership, with most larger groups, including News UK which publishes *The Times*, joining Ipsos.

Two Liberal Democrat peers, Lord Clement-Jones and Lord McNally, a former justice minister, are separately seeking to have the Ipsos code removed from the list recognised by the legislation. The pair, and Lord Skidelsky,

have tabled amendments to the bill that will be debated on Monday.

Lord Skidelsky, 78, an economic historian, was a contemporary of Mr Mosley at Oxford. He wrote his first biography on Mr Mosley's father, the wartime fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley, whom he has described as his "hero".

The book's flattering portrayal of Sir Oswald led to Lord Skidelsky losing his job at an American university.

Lord Skidelsky has been a frequent critic of the press.

In 2008 the state-run *China Daily* newspaper published an article by the peer in which he used the exposé of Mr Mosley to question if there could be "too much press freedom". He called for stricter controls on what newspapers could write about people's private lives.

In 2013 he agreed with Hacked Off, a pressure group of which Mr Mosley is a key supporter, to table an amendment to a bill designed to cut red tape in business, which would have compelled the government to implement Lord Leveson's plans for all newspapers to be covered by a state-approved regulator.

His register of interests at the House of Lords shows that until July he was a non-executive director of Rusano Capital, an investment company owned by the Russian government. He remains a non-executive director of Russneft, one of Russia's biggest oil refiners.

The Times understands that Labour is working in tandem with the National Union of Journalists on its own amendment, which may be tabled today.

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Masterful matador silences an homage from Caledonia

Patrick Kidd
Political Sketch



Let us move away, just for a day, from the gloom that has settled over the Commons after the Battle of Fondled Knee and the interminable fag that surrounds Brexit and head, mentally if not literally, for the cloudless skies of the Costa Brava where the locals are eager to break away from Spain.

Hywel Williams, the Plaid Cymru member for Arfon, had asked an urgent question on the political situation in Catalonia as its inhabitants seek their own version of Brexit, whatever that may be called. Catalonia? This is of great interest to the nationalists in Wales and especially Scotland, who see kindred spirits grumbling in the tapas bars the length of La Rambla.

Into the arena strode the dapper figure of Sir Alan Duncan, bristling with intent like a pocket matador. Sir Alan basks in the title of minister for Europe and the Americas but today he was El Dunco, master of the *corridas* of power, ready to take

on the substantial bull coming at him from Plaid and the SNP.

This is an internal matter for Spain, he said. Catalonia had held an illegal referendum and falsely declared independence from one of our key allies. "We consider it essential that the rule of law be upheld and the Spanish constitution respected." And with this, he turned his beaky nose towards the chuntering Scottish Nationalists and gave them a haughty glare. Olé!

Emily Thornberry, the shadow foreign secretary, sought peace, or rather a fudge. Was there not some middle ground, she said, between independence and direct rule? "What are the UK government doing to promote that? Or does Brexit suck so much life from our ability to have any influence in Europe that the honest answer is, 'Not a lot'?"

Sir Alan replied that the only choice was between obeying the law or not. Then the SNP got their go. Peter Grant (Glenrothes), wearing no fewer than three saltire badges on his lapels, said that the law was a

Sir Alan Duncan stood his ground in the Commons

matter of opinion. America, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia had all made illegal declarations of independence. Mandela and Gandhi, whose statues now stand in Parliament Square, had started off as criminals. "If it's illegal to express an opinion, the law must be changed," Mr Grant said.

Sir Alan was not too impressed. "It's not for us to get involved," he said. Alan Brown (SNP, Kilmarnock & Loudoun) asked that, if this were so, what is the point of having ambassadors? David Linden (SNP, Glasgow East) observed that HMG wasn't too worried about foreign governments giving an opinion on the Scottish referendum.

The Rutland *torero* swerved the bull again and again. He was more bored than gored. The *tercio de muerte* arrived when Jonathan Edwards (Plaid, Carmarthen East & Dinefwr) excitedly called this "the return of tyranny" and said that history would not look kindly on Britain's inaction. El Dunco laughed at him.

"Nonsense," he said. "In fact, something ruder than that." And with a snarl he plunged his sword into the back of the bull, brushed his hands and walked off.

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