

Sir Ray Tindle CBE DL
Chairman
Tindle Newspapers Ltd
The Old Court House
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey
GU9 7PT

9th June 2011

Dear Sir Ray,

North London and Herts Newspapers

We are writing to express our concern at the ongoing dispute at the North London and Herts newspapers group and to request a meeting with you to discuss this matter.

For your information the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) represents 38,000 members working in all sectors of the media, including staff, students and freelancers - writers, reporters, editors, sub-editors, photographers, illustrators and people who work in public relations.

The NUJ Parliamentary Group was established on a cross party basis and meets regularly, along with the union, to discuss areas of interest within the media industry. The Group provides an opportunity to keep MPs fully informed of the unions concerns and has enabled us to work in cooperation and partnership with the NUJ to raise the profile of the issues that affect members across the media sector domestically and internationally.

As you will be aware the NUJ has engaged in lengthy negotiations with local management at the newspaper group. Despite these discussions we understand that the local management refused to commit to replace staff or bring in a junior reporter in order to assist the existing staff with their workloads. The Group understands that over the last two years more than half of the newsdesk has left the company without being replaced and consequently there are currently only three reporters covering the nine newspapers in the group (and one of these will be leaving the company shortly with no word on her replacement). We believe that Tindle Newspapers policy of non-replacement of staff means that the remaining reporters are unable to leave their desks because of the pressures of copy required of them on an ongoing basis. As such the Group believes that this means journalists at the newspapers do not have time to cover important stories in depth, are unable to cover community or political events, council meetings and court cases.

The Group supports the local philosophy of the Tindle Newspapers group and endorses the words of Brian Doel, the Group Managing Director who is quoted as 'we've kept each title very local with local editors and subs and reporters as much as possible. They know most about the community they serve'¹. However we believe that the situation at the North London and Herts newspaper group is somewhat different to this philosophy. For example, we are led to believe that local management has taken a decision to dispense with all the freelance photographers who were

¹ Tindle Newspapers Ltd Website <http://www.tindlenews.co.uk/about.cfm>



PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

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relied upon to cover evening and weekend jobs; a regular sub-editor who assisted with the subbing of the newspapers and a journalist used for occasional holiday cover have all been dismissed.

As you will know these steps, and the exhausting of the negotiating procedures, left the NUJ with no alternative but to ballot their members at the group for industrial action. Consequently NUJ members at the Group took industrial action for two weeks between April 18 and April 29 2011. We are informed that the NUJ is conducting a fresh ballot on industrial action and that the previous strike was well supported by the local community.

In order to resolve this dispute amicably for all parties and to preserve quality local newspapers we would like to invite you to meet with a delegation of MPs and trade union representatives from the NUJ to discuss this case as soon as possible.

Please liaise with our parliamentary co-ordinator, Simeon Andrews (details below) andrewss@parliament.uk who will make whatever arrangements are necessary for such a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

John McDonnell MP
Secretary, NUJ Parliamentary Group

Austin Mitchell MP
Chair, NUJ Parliamentary Group

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