

Comments on FB's idea that the Press should be controlled with a Royal Charter

by Lord Fowler

Lord Fowler (Conservative) 'As the House may remember, I am not an unreserved supporter of royal charters. As I have noted before, the charter website says: "New grants of Royal Charters are these days reserved for eminent professional bodies or charities which have a solid record of achievement". I have never thought that that totally includes the British press, particularly not at this moment, after the scandals that we have had. I observe also, in passing, that the royal charter is described as the bright idea of Oliver Letwin MP. In fact, the idea came - as all these good ideas do - from the *Times* letters column 5 December 2012. It was suggested by a correspondent from Budleigh Salterton, who also wrote to me. As with so many things in this debate, you could not make it up. He wrote in the *Times* that a press body could be set up by, "a royal charter overseen by the Privy Council, an ancient body descended from the 'wise men' who were advisers to the monarch before Britain became a constitutional monarchy". It is certainly one way of defending a royal charter. It is not entirely my way of looking at it, but I do not wish to be rude in any way to the writer of that letter, Francis Bennion, whom some of us may even remember as a parliamentary counsel here . . . [The royal charter] is a compromise and no one should claim anything more, but it gives us the opportunity of a new beginning and an end to the deep misconduct which has affected some newspapers. It deserves support and, above all, I hope that the press will now co-operate in making it a success.' HL Deb, 18 March 2013, c442, Report (5th Day) of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill.

See also FB's associated letters and articles on this topic:

[2012.025 T145L 'Treat journalism as a profession with its own ethical charter', The Times 5 Dec 2012](#)

[2013.008 T148L 'Why we don't want a press statute', The Times 18 Mar 2013](#)

[2013.009 DT002A 'FB's article on Leveson Report', The Daily Telegraph 20 Mar 2013](#)

[2013.010 T149L 'Dubious press amendments', The Times 22 Mar 2013](#)

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Doc. No. 2012.004.NFB

HL Deb, 18 March 2013, c442,

Report (5th Day) of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill.

For full version of abbreviations click 'Abbreviations' on FB's website.