

Witness: Lord Condon QPM DL  
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**The Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practices and Ethics of the Press**

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This is the exhibit marked 'PC/1' referred to in the statement of Lord Condon,  
dated this 27<sup>th</sup> day of January 2012.

## The great Condon cover-up

Kelvin MacKenzie

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Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, is preventing crime stories from reaching the press, says Kelvin MacKenzie

A CRIME reporter I have known for more than a decade told me an extraordinary story. A well-respected journalist of a local paper was making her way home on a winter's evening. Suddenly she was jumped on by a sex attacker; bravely she stood up to the attacker and after a struggle saw him off. Still shaken, the journalist was taken down to the police station. As she relived her nightmare, the police officer said, 'You were lucky, there have been four other attacks down that road.' The journalist creased her brow. She worked for the local paper, but the story had never been reported. Why? It appeared that relations between the paper and the police were poor and officers had simply, and disgracefully, decided to keep the story to themselves.

I was astonished. What right had the police to withhold such vital information? Had the journalist known of the attacks, she would certainly have not walked down that road. But I was to become even more astonished as my crime reporter friend began to detail how Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Commissioner, was attempting, very successfully, to stop police officers disclosing 'unauthorised' information of any kind to journalists.

From the year dot there has been an uneasy relationship between press and police. When there is a big show trial, senior officers fall over themselves to give background information and pictures of themselves to the media. But police life is not all about drug barons being swooped on, psychos being snared or IRA terrorists being trailed. It is, as Condon of the Yard knows only too well, about muggings, car theft and burglary. And if there is too much reporting of such crimes in the papers, on radio and television then the people might think that the police are not on top of the job.

So Condon has come up with a unique solution: don't stop the crime, stop the reporting of the crimes. In fact, he is so determined that his officers are now studying the mobile phones and pagers of crime journalists to see which numbers are calling in. They then trace the numbers, looking for links with detectives. To get round this, many journalists now give a number to their contacts - say, 18 - so that when the officer leaves a pager message with 18 on it the reporter simply goes to a payphone and calls the number. Is this really the way to behave in the information age?

I'm further told that the Complaints Investigation Bureau (CIB2) have a special team concentrating on newsmen. Excuse me, but would it not be a better use of public money if there were more anti-mugging patrols?

Now I would argue that if a policeman receives a tip fee for revealing a break-in that should have been reported anyway under a less Stalinist regime, that's fine. The crime reporters, however, take a different line. They say they have known many of their contacts for years, often doing them a favour by giving huge dollops of publicity to stories which normally rate no more than a couple of paragraphs. A basis of trust begins to develop, and over the years they help each other. Today, under the Condon regime, all help has come to an end. Worse, officers who are thought to have assisted journalists find that they are not promoted or get a mysterious posting sending them from the drug squad to the traffic department. Forget for a minute the ludicrous scenario of officers quaking in their shoes as the crime reporter approaches - what about the moral question of withholding information?

As part of the police crackdown, crime victims are asked to tick a box if they want publicity. This is a neat device to enable them to hide behind the phrase, 'He doesn't want publicity.' How absurd! The truth is, crime victims should have few rights over the publicity surrounding the event, with the exception that their identity should, under certain circumstances, be withheld. I want to know - I demand to know - how many muggings there have been down certain streets so that I don't go there. My daughter demands to know if there has been a rape in her area so that she can take extra care; my mother demands to know if there have been burglaries anywhere near her so that she can put on that extra bolt at night and feel a little safer. A victim is a vital link in the security chain.