

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION: the media and the introduction of congestion charging in central London¹

When Ken Livingstone became London's first elected Mayor in 2000 he said that transport was the 'single most important priority for the Mayor and the GLA'². However, the introduction of a congestion charge for vehicles entering central London was a long way down Livingstone's declared list of transport priorities. Reporting the launch of his manifesto the London *Evening Standard* quoted his transport priorities as:

There are plans to freeze Tube and bus fares for four years and to investigate a 70p flat fare for the buses. He would campaign for the building of CrossRail and the Chelsea-to-Hackney line. The immediate emphasis would be on buses, with new routes from outer to inner London, better policing of bus lanes and the introduction of park-and-ride schemes. Senior LT bosses would be forced to use public transport and any proposal to provide chauffeur-driven transport for GLA members or senior personnel would be blocked.³

Only at this point does the report mention the fact that: 'Mr Livingstone would introduce a congestion charge.' Indeed, such was the low level of interest in this particular proposal that only two national newspapers covering the launch of Livingstone's manifesto even mentioned it, and both those, noting the tentative nature of Livingstone's commitment, only to point out that the candidate appeared to be backtracking from his original firm promise to introduce the charge.⁴

The significance of this low-key coverage is that whilst congestion charging was not a matter of great controversy during Livingstone's mayoral campaign, subsequent to his election the issue became something of a near-hysterical obsession with the London-wide and national media. Such a conclusion emerges from research undertaken by this author which looked at the coverage of congestion charging in the national and London-wide media in the period from January 2002, through the launch of the charge in February 2003 and then for a subsequent three months until the end of May 2003.⁵

Negativity

The analysis reveals some interesting, if depressing, characteristics about the British media. One of the great clichés of British journalism is that 'good news is no news' and never more was this cliché more reflected than in the extent to which, in

the context of congestion charging, the majority of the media fell upon each and every prediction of chaos, gridlock and 'the end of civilization as we know it' with such relish. There was hardly a suggestion that congestion charging was a rational response to London's ever-worsening traffic congestion - a solution that had long been advocated by numerous transport experts.

The media appeared to be reluctant to accept that London's Mayor, Ken Livingstone, had been elected on a mandate to introduce such a scheme, that he had the courage (some would say the folly) to ignore all the merchants of doom and push ahead with its introduction, not because he believed it would be popular, but because he believed there to be no reasonable alternative.

The British media has a particular standing in the world. The range and technical quality of the national press is impressive by the standards of most of the world's newspapers; and its broadcasting, with its strong tradition of public service, is widely admired. However, the British media is also seen as having a particularly negative standpoint - whether it be evidenced in its attitudes towards British sporting achievements, the treatment of its celebrities and politicians, or, as in this case, to British innovation. It is doubtful if there are many countries in the world that would report the successful introduction of such a major social innovation as congesting charging without some vestiges of national pride. How was it therefore that a policy that clearly benefited the many came to be characterised as an eccentric proposal designed to placate minority interests that could only have emanated from a politician as divorced from the mainstream as Ken Livingstone was perceived to be?

One explanation lies in the fact that the policy was undoubtedly a radical one and one that's implementation required significant political courage. Any policy which is designed to tackle a problem as long-standing and seemingly intractable as traffic congestion in central London is almost invariably going to be perceived as controversial.

A second explanation is that congestion charging brought together an alliance of vested interests which were all well-organised in media terms. The organisations representing road-users - the AA, the RAC, the Freight Transport

Association and so on - have well-developed links with the media. By contrast, there is no countervailing organisation arguing for the rights of commuters. There might be passenger user consultative groups but none have the high profile or robust media handling skills and experience, which were found on the other side of the argument. It could be argued (only slightly tongue-in cheek) that despite the media's presumption of speaking on behalf of 'ordinary people', there is a real need for a national organisation of 'ordinary people'.

But perhaps the most important factor that caused congestion charging to be seen as something outlandish was that the policy did not receive the vocal support of either of the two main political parties represented in the London Assembly and indeed was associated with a politician whom, friends and enemies alike, would accept was 'controversial'. The Conservatives were opposed to the policy in principle and maintained a campaign of unremitting, but legitimate, political hostility. Labour was in a different position. In the 2000 mayoral election they had campaigned for the introduction of such a policy but in that election Ken Livingstone had not been their candidate. Hence, having lost the election Labour, both in London and nationally, became ambivalent about the policy. The party found it difficult to oppose it in principle but were reluctant to support any policy that might result in the Mayor, elected as an independent, gaining any political credit. Indeed at one stage it was being suggested in the press that Labour was secretly colluding in undermining the introduction of the charge.⁶ The press also suggested (which was not contradicted by Labour) that Livingstone was an isolated, possibly deluded, figure. In June 2002 the *Sunday Times* wrote:

One aspect of the farrago has been the notable absence of allies speaking up for the beleaguered city boss. Expelled from the Labour party, loathed by Tony Blair, abandoned by most of his old Greater London Council (GLC) chums and at odds with the London boroughs, Livingstone cuts a lonely figure and finally seems to be paying the price for his maverick independence. He is "one of the most friendless, least trusted politicians on the planet."⁷

The contours of coverage

The analysis of the reporting of the introduction of congestion charging indicates that the range of support and opposition for the scheme did not fit the conventional political lines of the known allegiances of the press. Certainly

opposition to congestion charging was led by the *Evening Standard* (despite the isolated voice of its leader column which periodically reminded readers of the paper's theoretical support for the scheme) The *Standard* is published by the Conservative-supporting Associated Newspaper group as are the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday* - they were equally vitriolic in their opposition to the scheme. However, the London free-sheet *The Metro*, also owned by Associated Newspapers, was far more balanced in its coverage. The Conservative-supporting *Daily Telegraph* and the Murdoch-owned *Sun* and, its stable mate, *The Times*, were also very opposed. But nor was there any great enthusiasm from traditionally left-of-centre newspapers. The *Daily Mirror* and *The Independent* veered between opposition and cynicism. *The Guardian* was cautiously supportive but among the dailies it was only the *Daily Express* and, most of all the *Financial Times*, that could be characterised as, more or less, consistent supporters. The Sunday newspapers tended to follow the lead of their daily counterparts. On the broadcasting front ITV's *London Tonight*, tended to take its lead from the press - its overall coverage could be described as falling into the negative camp. But it was BBC TV's local London coverage that stood apart from all media - not in terms of giving the scheme positive support - but in terms of the sheer quantity and quality of the public service reporting it offered. Night after night, particularly in the crucial days leading up to C-Day, it provided viewers with high quality information which described what the charge would involve, how it could be paid it and gave a range of off-air sources for viewers to obtain further information.

'Common Sense'

Through an analysis of congestion charge coverage, and probably with more general applicability, it can be seen that the centre of political gravity of both the national daily papers and their Sunday equivalents is conservative with a small 'c' - they are against many things but change is the one they fear most. If one looks at the overall coverage of congestion charging one sees a clear pattern emerging - namely that the congestion charging scheme was a massive gamble for which London, and its Mayor, were ill-prepared. Accordingly no 'sensible' politician would embark on this course; therefore if such a course was being pursued there had to be some other explanation or motive to hand. And that motive was ascribed, at various times, to the Mayor's 'hatred' of motor cars, to his desire to be seen as a righteous politician, to his need to raise revenue or his own version of extremist environmental concern.⁸

Another significant factor in the coverage of the congestion charge was the fact that most of the reporting was framed in terms of the 'motorist'. The story was, in the main, covered by motoring correspondents. Almost by definition, motoring correspondents are car-enthusiasts - advocates for motoring and the motorist. Thus it was hardly surprising that all the motoring correspondents, bar one,⁹ were opposed to the charge. Some made their opposition clear, often in vitriolic language. Jeremy Clarkson in the *Sunday Times* and Mike Rutherford (variously of the *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mirror* and *News of the World*) led the pack. They pitched their arguments in terms of seeing the charge as an illegitimate attack on the rights of 'freeborn Englishmen' to drive their cars wherever they liked, irrespective of the consequences. Typical in tone was a piece written by Rutherford in the *Daily Mirror*. He characterised the charge thus:

Once the money-grubbing authorities discover they can earn a fortune by lifting billions from the pockets of drivers in London, the scam will quickly spread...but this racket - whether it is in London or anywhere else - is full of deceptive holes, contradictions, hypocrisy and is nothing short of legalised mugging.¹⁰

The 'loony left' rides again

There is no denying that the particular personality of the Mayor - Ken Livingstone - has been a key factor in the various ups and downs of his political career. Just as, 20 years earlier, coverage of the GLC very much centred on Livingstone as an individual, so too did coverage of the congestion charge, which was invariably portrayed as his 'pet project'. It is a widespread nostrum of popular journalism that news stories are usually best communicated through the vehicle of a strong personality or a clash of personalities. Thus, it was perhaps not surprising, that much of the coverage of congestion charging focussed on the personality of the Mayor.

It is both a politician's strength and weakness to be able to supply the media with graphic quotations - journalists veer towards those politicians who, in their terms, 'deliver'. One only needs to think about the high public profile (as opposed to the political standing) of MPs such as Labour's Diane Abbott or the Conservatives' Michael Portillo - to see current examples of this phenomenon in

action. Livingstone was both able to deliver 'quotable' sound bites and provide controversial observations. In addition, because of the national Labour leadership's high profile opposition to his Mayoral candidature, he also attracted publicity because he was seen to epitomise grassroots activist opposition to Tony Blair's leadership of the Labour Party. For all these reasons, the congestion charge scheme became closely bound up with the Mayor as an individual and as a politician – its success or failure would be his success or failure. Thus both the London newspaper *The Metro* and ITV's *London Tonight*, generally referred to the charge as 'Livingstone's' or 'Ken's controversial charge' and often featured pictures of the Mayor to illustrate the scheme.

For students of media history there are unmistakable echoes between the way the congestion charge issue was covered and the coverage of left Labour councils - particularly in London - during the eighties. Indeed, in some ways congestion charging can be seen as a textbook 'loony left' case-study. The phrase 'loony left' combines two concepts, insanity and left-wing politics, with a sub-text that suggests irrational authoritarianism. In analysing the words and phrases used to describe the charge and, particularly the Mayor, the researcher is struck by the explicit way that these concepts were articulated - and the ferocity in which they were expressed.

This articulation had three distinct resonances - one that connected Livingstone with 'insanity', one that connected him with 'authoritarianism' and one that connected him with 'left-wing extremism' - these last two being inextricably linked (and all 'complimented' by a steady diet of personal abuse of the Mayor). For example, in April 2002, the *Evening Standard* profiled the Mayor in extraordinary terms. From the first 150 words of the article it could be gleaned that Livingstone was 'a snapping, snarling brute', 'voracious', 'frightening', 'ugly', 'raging' and 'gripped by paranoia'.¹¹ A similar, though marginally less vicious, profile was carried by the paper in July 2002 of the man seen as operationally responsible for the introduction of the charge, Transport for London's Derek Turner. The paper dubbed him 'Red Derek' - coincidentally (or otherwise) redolent of 'Red Robbo', the 70's left-wing motor industry union leader, Derek Robinson.¹²

The 'Sanity' Issue

The 'sanity' issue cropped up frequently. The *Daily Telegraph* talked about 'Ken Livingstone's mad-cap plans for London traffic control.'¹³ *The Sunday Times* of 'madness' imposed by a 'barmy'¹⁴ dictator. Their motoring columnist, Jeremy Clarkson, wrote about 'Ken's barrage of harebrained ideas' and described the Mayor as 'insane' and 'crazy'. Warming to his theme Clarkson wrote:

Obviously, it would be insane to charge motorists for using the roads and then to charge them again whenever they wished to enter a city. But, then again, the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, charming and charismatic though he may be, has only ever been on nodding terms with the notion of sanity"¹⁵.

For the *Sunday Mirror* Livingstone was 'barmy' and congestion charging, a 'farce' created by a 'power-crazed and authoritarian politician'.¹⁶ It was the *Sun* though that took the prize. describing Livingstone variously, as the 'madcap Mayor', 'crafty', 'crazy', 'loopy', 'cunning', 'crackpot', 'potty' and 'barmy'¹⁷. The idea that congestion charging was somehow, innately 'insane' became part of the media's vocabulary and was encapsulated by the *News of the World* which used the congestion charge as the template for 'insanity' when it reported: 'Loony Ken Livingstone has had an even crazier idea than traffic congestion charges...'¹⁸

'Authoritarianism'

Despite the fact that some critics of congestion charging pointed to the fact that it could be seen as a regressive tax, and the ultimate free-market solution to London's traffic problems, for much of the media it was portrayed as the ultimate in socialist authoritarianism. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, claimed that the charge was 'one more insidious attack on people's individual liberties'. The paper also argued that the scheme demonstrated 'totalitarian tendencies' of the state, symbolised by 'Red Ken [who] is well on his way to creating the Soviet road scheme.'¹⁹ The introduction of congestion charging coincided with a 'Free Britain' campaign being waged by the *Telegraph*, based on the notion that the Labour Government was intent on infringing the ancient civil liberties of Britons. It wrapped the congestion charge into this campaign, claiming that it would 'interfere with the rights of Londoners to drive where they wish?'²⁰ The *Mail on Sunday*, in opposing the scheme, gave space to the Conservatives' front-bench spokesperson on transport, Tim Collins. He wrote: 'There appears to be a good old-fashioned dose of class-Marxism stirred in too. Producing permanent gridlock in our capital city may

be the idea of paradise for far-left activists, but it would be a nightmare for everyone else.'²¹

For the *Sunday Mirror* Livingstone was a 'power-crazed and authoritarian politician'.²² This was a sentiment shared by the Political Editor of the *Sun*, Trevor Kavanagh, who, invoking all his powers of rhetoric, wrote: 'Traffic is grinding to a standstill and thousands of Brits are thinking of emigrating... Families put up with graffiti, street crime and high property prices. Now they can't even drive on their own streets.' And he went on to describe Livingstone as a 'power-crazed petty dictator'²³. But perhaps the most tasteless contribution could be found, perhaps surprisingly, in *The Observer* whose reporter found a rabbi whose synagogue fell inside the charge zone and who was willing to be quoted as saying that 'Livingstone is going to cause more damage [to London] than the Germans!'²⁴

The 'loony left'

There is much in the characterisation of the congestion charge initiative, the way its implementation was reported, and in the reporting of the Mayor's role, that appeared to follow the pattern of how the 'loony left' was reported twenty years earlier, particularly in the way that the media sought to counterpoint the notion of 'common sense' against the left's special pleading for 'the other'. When the 'loony left' was first being identified by the press the 'other' were gays, feminists and so on. Their presumed views were contrasted with media notions of 'normality' - the views of the silent majority, or whatever formulation was being used at the time, to represent those who were not black, not gay, not disabled - in other words the classic nuclear family with its 2.4 children.

If such is the norm in some parts of the UK - and that is extremely doubtful - then it is decidedly not the case in London, a multicultural metropolis in which lifestyles, family structures and ethnicity are very different from the fabled norm. Yet the congestion charge was portrayed as a policy designed for the minority, in contrast to the views and interests of ordinary tax-paying car-drivers. Yet the irony was that the congestion charge was aimed at benefiting bus, tube and rail commuters who represent the vast majority of London's travelling public, at the expense of the one in ten commuters who travel into the capital by car.

Nonetheless, sections of the press lost few opportunities to construct, or re-construct, a 'loony left' agenda out of what they took to be the motivations behind, and the consequences of, the introduction of congestion charging. In the *Daily Telegraph*, columnist Barbara Amiel told us that that the charge was part of an agenda that was intended to 'coerce people on to public transport, and to eliminate the private car.'¹²⁵ Sarah Sands, writing in the same paper, claimed that it was an 'anti-family London tax' because it would drain the life out of the capital by making it difficult for families to use cars to move around.¹²⁶ On a later occasion she accused the Mayor of 'using congestion charges as class war by other means.'¹²⁷ Simon Heffer in the *Daily Mail*, outraged by the apparent success of the scheme, turned his spleen on its supposed supporters, arguing they were the same people with the same agenda that he had been battling against over the years: 'Only six days into London's congestion charge, the usual Lefties and eco-freaks are queuing up to say what a success it is. In fact, it is yet another tax on the capital's middle classes.'¹²⁸

The *Sun* used generalised images of inner city decay, some of which had become associated with left wing Labour councils in the eighties, and bracketed them with the charge: 'Families put up with graffiti, street crime and high property prices. Now they can't even drive on their own streets.'¹²⁹ it complained. But the theme of 'the loony left rides again' was best captured by *Sun* columnist Richard Littlejohn when he wrote, (perhaps with his tongue firmly in cheek) that the charge was '... a spiteful anti-motorist measure, pure and simple, dreamed up by Red Ken and his sexually-inadequate, Lycra-clad, Guardian-reading, cycle-mad, control-freaks at TfL (Transport for London).'¹³⁰

Statistical analysis of the use of the terms 'loony left' and 'Red Ken'¹³¹ reveals that in the period January 2002 to the end of May 2003, the *Sun*, perhaps unsurprisingly, topped the table with 29 references to 'Red Ken' and 10 to the 'loony left'. But it was only just narrowly ahead of the *Daily Telegraph* which referred to 'Red Ken' 31 times and the 'loony left' seven times. The detailed breakdown was as follows:

References to the 'loony left and 'Red Ken' in the national press

January 2002 - May 2003

Red Ken	Loony Left	Total
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<i>Sun</i>	29	10	39
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	31	7	38
<i>Evening Standard</i>	23	14	37
<i>The Times</i>	19	12	31
<i>Daily Mail</i>	16	10	26
<i>The Independent</i>	17	4	21
<i>The Guardian</i>	10	9	19
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	7	9	16
<i>Daily Express</i>	13	2	15
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	10	5	15
<i>Financial Times</i>	9	2	11
<i>Sunday Express</i>	10	0	10
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	9	1	10
<i>Daily Star</i>	9	1	10
<i>News of the World</i>	4	1	5
<i>Independent on Sunday</i>	3	1	4
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	1	3	4
<i>The People</i>	2	1	3
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	2	1	3
<i>The Observer</i>	0	3	3
<i>The Metro</i> ³²	n/a	n/a	n/a

Doom and Gloom

News desks are hard taskmasters - keeping their reporters under continual pressure to come up with 'fresh' angles to running stories. Congestion charging was a story that was long in gestation. Once the initial arguments had been outlined, and the details of the scheme announced (which took place in February 2002) there was little to sustain the momentum of coverage that would be required to see the project through to C-Day in February 2003. But both nature and journalism abhor a vacuum and, because not a great deal was happening through the many months leading up to the introduction of the charge, the media excelled itself in its invention of congestion charge horror stories. These fell into three main categories.

First, there were those based on the fears of specific groups and individuals who were mounting campaigns to oppose the charge - groups such as the Smithfield meat porters, the Freight Transport Association and the campaigning actress Samantha Bond. Second, there were stories derived from the scheme's critics and sceptics, those who lost no opportunity in predicting doom and gloom. These predictions included, for example, the inevitability of there being gridlock on the edge of the zone, the failure of the charging technology or mass civil disobedience. This category of soothsayers included the RAC Foundation, the Automobile Association and the National Federation of Small Business. And third, there were

the stories that emanated from the Mayor's political opponents – in this case the Conservative Group on the London Assembly and some Labour GLA members, most notably their transport spokesperson John Biggs.

As far as congestion charging was concerned there was no shortage of individuals and organisations - some hungry for publicity, some genuinely concerned about the issue and some just anxious to make political capital - who were more than happy to make gloomy predictions about the likely negative impact of the charge. Such stories were virtually uncheckable - and the more dire the warning the more likely they were to gain prominence.

The seductive attraction of the 'future' for journalists is that it is uncheckable – no one can contradict a forecast about future trends because no one is in a position to say, categorically, that what is predicted will never come to pass. Thus the media carried a wide range of stories that fuelled people's fears about the introduction of the congestion charge.³³ Some of the more 'unusual' scare stories included fears of more accidents being caused, either by delivery vehicles speeding-up to avoid being caught by the charge or as a result of motorists using their mobile phones to pay the charge. There were concerns about the deterioration in property in central London as homeowners in the charge zone struggled to pay the extra £5 a day that tradesmen were reportedly going to be adding to their bills. And there were fears that women would face growing joblessness as they refused to work in central London because it might entail them having to use public transport at night.³⁴

The London *Evening Standard* carried the most scare stories - 33 being identified over the period of the research, of which 13 were concentrated in the two months prior to the introduction of the charge in February 2003 alone. *The Metro* carried 21 scare stories, of which 11 were run in these two months. *The Times* carried 19 - of which only five were carried during the first two months of 2003. Reflecting the strength and consistency of its anti-charging coverage the *Daily Telegraph* carried 27 such stories, 10 of which were carried in the months of January and February 2003. Among the tabloids the *Sun* and the *Mirror* both carried 12 scare stories whilst the pro-charge *Daily Express* carried just two but, perhaps more surprisingly, the *Daily Mail*, despite its hostility only carried six such scare stories, compared to its sister paper the *Mail on Sunday*, which whilst appearing six times less frequently than the

Mail, managed to come up with 16 scare stories, 10 of which were run in the first two months of 2003.

The key scare stories centred on concerns about:

- administrative chaos as ‘innocent’ drivers were fined
- fears of technological meltdown,
- extra passengers flooding public transport,
- unfair penalisation of low paid and key sector workers,
- local businesses being driven out of central London,
- greater use being made of rat-runs
- potential gridlock in communities on the zone borders
- mass civil disobedience (i.e. non-payment of fines) and
- new opportunities for criminality.

Apart from stoking a general fear of the unknown, the underlying message of these stories was to suggest that the scheme was a poor one - flawed in its design and problematic in its implementation - and that the policy would have disastrous consequences for everyday life in London. The consistent repetition of such stories mitigated against the creation of a climate in which a rational debate about how best to organise road charging could take place.

Ironically, it is possible that the deluge of media stories suggesting that the scheme would create traffic gridlock might well have contributed to its smooth introduction, as wary motorists gave central London a wide berth in its early days of the scheme in order to avoid the much-predicted traffic nightmare

After the successful introduction of the charge, and with no signs of the predicted chaos materialising, these ‘scare’ themes were quietly dropped. But still little was written about the successful implementation of the scheme and its positive effects, nor did the press race to write stories about quite how wrong their previous predictions of chaos and meltdown had been.

Analysis of a 'conspiracy'³⁵

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the media's coverage of the introduction of congestion charging was an allegation, first made in the *Evening Standard* in March 2002, which claimed that there was a plot to make the introduction of congestion charging appear an immediate success, irrespective of its actual efficacy. The plot involved a secret plan to rig London's traffic lights in 2002 in order to increase congestion, and then re-rig the lights when the charge was introduced to give the impression that the easing of congestion was attributable to the charge, rather than the changed traffic lights sequencing.

The *Evening Standard's* original story³⁶ was based on one anonymous source. Anonymously sourced stories, and the credibility that the media should give them, was a central plank in the Hutton Inquiry in 2003³⁷ which investigated claims by the BBC that the Government had lied about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Hutton's general conclusion that stories should **never** be based on a single source is untenable, there are times when one source, of sufficient authority and credibility, is sufficient to form the basis of a news story. However, the way that the *Evening Standard's* covered the so-called traffic lights 'conspiracy' raises worrying questions about the reliability and integrity of that paper's use of sources.

The *Standard's* initial story attributed the claim that the lights were being 'rigged' to 'sources' - not even 'sources in Transport for London'. It is, by any definition, poor journalism not to give some clearer indication of the nature of such 'sources' - obviously not by identifying them by name but by giving a little more information to enable the reader to form some sort of judgement as to the credibility of the sources being relied upon. Subsequent media reports indicated that 'sources', in this case, probably referred to the Conservative Group in the London Assembly which, a few days earlier, had been given a briefing by Transport for London about traffic lights and the congestion charge, which they, or the *Evening Standard*, misinterpreted.

The 'misinterpretation', if that is the right word, arose from the fact that the briefing indicated that traffic lights were being altered in preparation for the introduction of the charge because they were to be used to re-direct traffic around the zone as the need arose. The *Evening Standard* 're-interpreted' this to mean that

the alteration of the lights was being used to facilitate the introduction of congestion charging by creating worse congestion in the lead-up period so that once the charge was up and running, and the lights re-set, the easing of congestion could be attributed to the 'success' of the scheme rather than the change in the traffic lights.

Following this 'misinterpretation' two interesting phenomena occurred. First, the *Standard* rapidly moved away from attributing the story to 'sources' but instead switched the source to themselves, using phrases such as: 'Since the Evening Standard first revealed how the traffic signals had been secretly re-phased...'¹³⁸ This attribution, apart from enabling the paper to blow its own trumpet, also appeared to give the story more credibility than the previously unspecified 'sources'. The second phenomenon was the *Standard's* novel interpretation of the Mayor's denial. Ken Livingstone issued an absolute denial about the traffic lights conspiracy; but instead of their taking this to mean that the Mayor rejected the truth of their story, the paper took this as confirmation of his guilt. They headlined the Mayor's rebuttal: 'Ken Livingstone.. refusing to come clean on "secret" plans to rig London's traffic lights'¹³⁹. Thus the Mayor was placed in a situation in which he was offered the choice of admitting that the *Evening Standard's* story was true - and thus being found guilty of practising a massive deceit on the people of London - or denying the charge and being found guilty of covering up the conspiracy. Either way he was presented as being either 'guilty', or 'guilty'.

'And another thing...'

When newspapers have a particular agenda to push - and they usually do - it is not uncommon for journalists, whether consciously or otherwise, to resort to practices that might, in the cold light of day appear questionable, but have been invoked because they appear to support the paper's agenda. This is not to suggest that, in the case of the introduction of congestion charging, deliberate lies were told, only that journalistic techniques were used that might well have given readers a misleading impression. One example was the tendency to use unreasonable juxtapositions. On a number of occasions this was used to give the impression that virtually all of London's traffic and transport problems in the run-up to the charge could be attributed to preparations for its introduction.

On 24 July 2002, for example, there was major traffic congestion as a result of a breakdown in the computer controlling central London's 800 traffic lights. This breakdown, and the subsequent congestion, had nothing whatsoever to do with the preparations for the introduction of the charge, but this was not the impression that would have been gleaned from reading the *Evening Standard's* report:

These are the worst conditions we have seen for a long time with motorists completely blocked in," said Rebecca Rees of the AA. *Thousands of traffic lights are being re-phased as part of Mayor Ken Livingstone's Transport for London (TfL) plan to give pedestrians longer to cross roads, to redirect traffic away from sensitive sites and to speed bus trips. Critics claim that the re-phasing would be reversed when congestion charging starts, to give the impression that the £ 5a-day scheme is improving traffic flow* (italics added). The computer failed at 6.15am. TfL said engineers were immediately scrambled to fix the software problem.⁴⁰

The sentences in italics gave the impression that, in some way, the congestion was due, at least in part, to the traffic lights 'conspiracy' - a charge that was not substantiated in any way in the *Standard's* report.

This was by no means an isolated example. The *Daily Mirror*, reporting the same story (in September) made a different spurious connection. They linked the gridlock to work in connection with another of the Mayor's initiatives - the pedestrianisation of Trafalgar Square. The paper reported that: 'Carmageddon finally arrived in Britain's capital city one sunny morning recently. Traffic ground to a halt for several hours because of roadworks to pedestrianise part of Trafalgar Square.' But that was not the end of their spurious links. They then connected the congestion with the traffic lights 'conspiracy' - claiming it 'was the last straw for many drivers who have seen average road speeds fall to as low as 2.9 mph, after traffic lights were re-phased deliberately to slow journeys and frustrate drivers out of their cars.'⁴¹

The paper then went on to link traffic congestion in London with a whole host of other issues:

heavy rains trapped thousands of Tube travellers underground in sweat-box trains which are as unreliable as they are filthy. Daily, hundreds of thousands more commuters face misery on severely overcrowded, late-running overland trains. On the streets, litter is dropped at the rate of around a ton a minute across the city. And earlier this year, London was officially named as the second worst capital city in Europe for air quality and street cleanliness.⁴²

The only common theme, according to the *Mirror*, was the Mayor: 'At the centre of this chaos is London's Mayor Ken Livingstone, the ringmaster – some would say clown – who is big on style but currently short on substance.'⁴³

A further example of juxtaposition came on the first day of the congestion charge the *Evening Standard* reported a story about problems on the railway: '6,000 passengers stranded as rail power lines collapse' was the headline. It had nothing to do with the introduction of the charge but the paper clearly could not resist the temptation of adding a second paragraph that read: 'Adding to the chaos expected to accompany the introduction of the congestion charge...'⁴⁴

Getting the facts to fit the story - a case study

Newspapers like to have an 'attitude'. Once a consensus has been established, in this case that the charge was hopelessly misconceived and bound to end in disaster, then it becomes increasingly difficult for reporters with a different story to tell, to obtain space. The old tongue-in-cheek adage - never let the facts get in the way of a good story - is one way that less scrupulous journalists come to terms with this situation.

In November 2002 the freelance transport specialist Christian Wolmar was commissioned by the *Mail on Sunday* to write a guide to the congestion charge. Whilst overall the substance of the article was largely neutral there were sufficient barbs in the piece to indicate that Wolmar, previously a congestion charge supporter, had become an opponent. However, a few months later, through the nefarious route of the rival *Sunday Express* picking up on a column that Wolmar had written for a specialist transport magazine⁴⁵, it emerged that he had been the victim of the *Mail on Sunday*'s anti-charge agenda. Responding to an outraged reader of *Rail* magazine, Wolmar had written:

You find it surprising that I criticized the London congestion charging scheme in a recent *Mail on Sunday* feature. So did I. I wrote a piece that was broadly supportive of the scheme but highlighted a few problems. The *Mail on Sunday*, however, edited my words without consulting me and added in whole chunks of copy to make it into an anti-charging tirade. I fully support Livingstone's scheme and see it as a key experiment which, if it works, will be used elsewhere to raise money for use in rail and other public transport.⁴⁶

The 'editing' of Wolmar's article makes an interesting case study in the deliberate introduction of bias into originally objective copy and highlights some of

the trends discussed above. By comparing the *Mail's* version with Wolmar's original it is possible to see how, in four distinct areas, significant changes in emphasis were created.⁴⁷

The article took the form of questions and answers about the charge. One of the first questions posed was 'What are the likely problems?' Wolmar originally wrote: 'Critics of the scheme have pointed to a host of potential problems' identifying the fact that the 'problems' emanated from the critics. In the *Mail on Sunday* this was changed to: 'There are almost too many of them to list'. A subsequent question dealt with Capita, the company put in charge of running the scheme. Wolmar had originally written: 'Capita, which has a patchy record on the provision of other services for councils ...' in the *Mail on Sunday* this became 'Capita - the same company that was fined by the Government for the fiasco over teacher vetting which delayed the return to school of thousands of pupils this autumn ...' - an undeniable fact but one not found in the original piece.

However, it is changes to two other parts of Wolmar's article that most strikingly reveal the prejudices of the newspaper. In answer to the controversial question: 'Has traffic in London being deliberately made worse over the last few months?' Wolmar, in measured terms, wrote:

There has been a set of roadworks and changes across the capital recently which have brought London to a virtual standstill and led to accusations that there has been a deliberate attempt to make things worse in order to make the new scheme look good. Traffic director Turner admits that schemes around the boundary, such as Shoreditch and Vauxhall, as well as the first phase of the Trafalgar Square part-pedestrianisation, have deliberately been carried out now in order that they will not interfere with the congestion charging scheme. They are expected to be completed in time for the scheme's introduction and, as a result, some traffic lights will also be rephased. Therefore, Londoners are likely to experience less congestion but mostly not as a result of the scheme."

This answer clearly did not satisfy the appetites of the *Mail on Sunday* which transformed it to:

Has traffic in London been deliberately made worse over the past few months? Yes. London has been brought to a virtual standstill recently by major projects at Vauxhall Cross, Smithfield and Trafalgar Square: some people believe they were deliberately timed to make the new scheme look good. From January to March this year there were 33,100 different sets of roadworks allowed to go ahead in London - a 29 per cent increase on the same period the previous year, and equivalent to 367 hold-ups a day. Since Transport for London was set up in July 2000 and began preparing for congestion charging, it has overseen the creation of 150 new bus lanes, further reducing the amount of car space on the road.

But the most insidious change, and for motorists the most infuriating, has been the rephrasing of traffic lights. More than 2,000 sets of lights across London have had their timing adjusted to delay the traffic. The duration of the green light at one corner of Trafalgar Square has been cut from 40 seconds to 11 seconds at rush hour and eight seconds at other times. Lights in the zone are likely to be rephased when charging is introduced to give the impression that traffic is flowing more smoothly. In addition, many of the roadworks will have been completed by February and others will not begin until congestion charging is well established. Another device used by Mr Livingstone to create congestion has been to fill in bus-stop bays. This forces the buses to stop on the road, blocking all the cars behind."

The changes made by the *Mail on Sunday* include the absolutely assertive 'Yes' to the question about the 'conspiracy' - a 'Yes' that is nowhere to be found in Wolmar's original answer, nor was the torrent of statistics, nor the emotive phrase 'the most insidious change and for motorists the most infuriating' - all of which were inserted without Wolmar's knowledge, as he told readers of *Rail* magazine.⁴⁸

In the final Q and A Wolmar attempted to answer the question 'Will it succeed? He had replied cautiously:

It depends what is meant by success. The scheme is unlikely to result in a massive reduction in London traffic, and the revenue of £130m per year is pretty small beer when set against the cost of a new tube line, which would be in the region of £5bn. In reality, it is a test. If it works, the mayor is likely to increase the charge which would then begin to have an impact, making public transport relatively cheaper. However, Livingstone has pledged not to impose a rise between now and the mayoral election in May 2004.

The *Mail on Sunday* reprinted Wolmar's answer and then added 'But remember, what is deemed a failure by motorists may be deemed a success for anti-car politicians who have found a new source of revenue.'

Don't quote me⁴⁹

The use of direct quotations, both in terms of selection and length, is one of the most useful indicators of the fairness, or otherwise, of media coverage. The *Evening Standard* carried some particularly striking examples of the use and misuse of quotations. In July 2002 the paper published an article about London's traffic problems which focussed on the scheme to pedestrianise part of Trafalgar Square. The article was hostile to the scheme and featured criticisms levelled by Kevin Delaney of the RAC Foundation. The article ran to over 700 words, of which 450 were direct or indirect quotations from Mr Delaney. These were 'balanced' with the following 18 words: 'Transport for London, headed by Mayor Ken Livingstone, is attempting to make the area more welcoming for pedestrians.'⁵⁰

Another use of quotations, that might have been misleading for the reader, was found in the *Standard* in October 2002 under a headline: 'Expert concedes "gamble" would lead to huge disruption'⁵¹. This related to an interview that, Professor David Begg, a prominent supporter of congestion charging, had given to Channel Four Television News. The article reported that:

London will be plunged into chaos when Mayor Ken Livingstone's congestion charging starts on 17 February next year, a senior figure involved with the scheme has admitted. Professor David Begg, a leading government transport adviser, said the scheme was a gamble and could fail. The Professor, a keen supporter of congestion charging, said that the project was a "live trial.. That's why the stakes are so high."⁵²

On the face of it this appeared to be damning criticism from one of the scheme's leading advocates. However, later into the article Begg was quoted as saying: 'If London doesn't get it right, we would suffer growing traffic congestion for our generation....I think the transport benefits would far outweigh the disbenefits.'⁵³ In other words Begg had not changed his position - he was merely accepting the obvious, that the congestion charging scheme could fail and if it did the consequences for London would be severe.

Primary definers

Those organised against the congestion charge were clearly much more successful in getting their voices heard than those who supported the scheme. The media's coverage of congestion charging represents a classic case of Stuart Hall's 'primary definers'.⁵⁴ This is the notion that journalists give preference to information that has come to them from known sources that they regard as 'authoritative'. In the case of congestion charging much of the negativity about the charge emanated from what were regarded as authoritative sources - the RAC Foundation, the Automobile Association, the Freight Transport Association, the Federation of Small Businesses and so on. All these organisations were well known to journalists and seen as 'reliable'. Because the Mayor and Transport for London were seen as 'controversial' - an adjective used frequently when describing him or the congestion charge - then he, and TfL, were not given the same credibility as is normally the case with official sources. In addition, the absence of support for congestion charging from either the Labour Group of the London Assembly or from central government, left the field open to the Conservatives, both on the London Assembly and in the House of Commons.

However, what is particularly significant in the narrative surrounding congestion charging is the fact that throughout the whole debate the voice of the bus and train commuters – 90% of the travelling public – was hardly, if ever, heard. Officially they are represented by the London Transport Users Committee but it is an organisation whose media profile is so low that it is not even referred to on Transport for London's own website.⁵⁵ And as far as this research has been able to establish no national or London-wide newspaper or broadcaster published a single comment from the organisation throughout the congestion charge controversy.⁵⁶ Thus without a recognisable 'authoritative' source the voice of those most affected by the charge went unheard. Certainly the Mayor and Transport for London were advocating the case for the commuter but they were seen as *parti pris* and therefore not considered to be 'authoritative sources'.

The Surreal

Media coverage of congestion charging at times veered into the surreal. For all the attacks on the Mayor for introducing a 'left wing' policy he was also attacked for introducing a 'Robin Hood in reverse' policy - one that robbed the poor to reward the rich. *The Independent* noted that it was ironic that a socialist politician had introduced such a 'radical, free-market idea.'⁵⁷ The newspaper described the charge as a 'poll tax on wheels'⁵⁸, one that discriminated against the poor and small businesses. The *Evening Standard's* columnist Simon Jenkins wrote several pieces on this theme which reached their apotheosis shortly after the charge had been introduced. The piece was headlined: 'Now the Rich Rule the Roads', Jenkins wrote:

And the poor? Ah, them. The Mayor has dealt with them. They are all underground, sweating in the salt mines of the Tube. They are cursing his policy. ...But for the time being, any motorist can cruise the streets of London on a cloud of fivers. Mr Livingstone has buried the poor underground, and given the rich a taste of paradise. What a stupendous irony.⁵⁹

Equally 'ironic' was the way that some newspapers, normally in the vanguard of support for 'law and order', decided that in this particular issue, civil disobedience was appropriate; and suggested various ways that their reader might sabotage the system. The *Daily Telegraph* led the field arguing: 'The only answer is guerrilla tactics. Here's one hush-hush tip – don't pay the London congestion charge in advance.'⁶⁰ The *Mail on Sunday* gave its readers specific advice on how to

sabotage the scheme: 'Protesters are planning to pay in pennies, send personal cheques to Livingstone and inundate payment lines with calls at 9.45pm each day (a time designed to cause maximum congestion at the call centre)' ⁶¹ And Mike Rutherford, writing in the *Daily Mirror*, wrote that the Mayor's 'car-loathing' plans can only be defeated if 'the motoring public take on the anti-car politicians, environmentalists and activists.' ⁶²

Less oppositional was Ross Clark in the *Sunday Telegraph* who described the policy as 'Alice in Wonderland' because it 'penalised the ordinary commuter for the sake of the irrational fear of congestion.' ⁶³ A statement that itself could be described as 'Alice in Wonderland' in that the 'ordinary commuter' he refers to - car drivers - constitute, fewer than 10% of London's commuters; in addition, to describe 'fear of traffic congestion' as 'irrational' is a statement that would not have disgraced Lewis Carroll's Mad March Hare.

But perhaps the most surreal piece of reporting was found in the *Mail on Sunday* which somehow contrived the notion that Ken Livingstone was Tony Blair's choice for Mayor. For despite Blair's successful campaign to block Livingstone from winning the Labour nomination for the mayoralty, (which led to Livingstone's expulsion from the Labour Party) the paper accused the Prime Minister of handing the job 'on a plate to Mr Livingstone' ⁶⁴. All of which must have come as something of a surprise both to Frank Dobson's, Labour's official candidate, and even more so to Ken Livingstone who had to run for Mayor as an independent.

The unwilling suspension of disbelief

Surreal is also a useful description of the way that some of press covered the first day of congestion charging. As London commuters experienced easier journeys to work and witnessed almost traffic-free streets they read in their papers of transport chaos and traffic gridlock. *The Metro*, for example, headlined its story on the first morning: 'Gridlock fears as road toll kicks in' and the paper reported:

Drivers were today battling through the first morning of congestion charging, hours after mayor Ken Livingstone gambled his job on its success. Up to 30,000 motorists were expected to leave their cars at home and try to get to work in London on over-crowded buses and Tubes instead. Traffic jams up to two-miles deep were forecast on the edge of the charging zone as drivers looked for rat runs and parking spaces to avoid paying the £5 fee. ⁶⁵

This first paragraph contained six unsourced predictions of what was likely to be happening that morning - all were incorrect.

The introduction of congestion charging perhaps represented the biggest single change to effect central London since the blitz but the first day of the scheme the *Evening Standard* took the decision to run their main charge story on an inside page. And the paper displayed great enthusiasm for anything that suggested that the scheme was not working:

There were the chaotic scenes outside Embankment station at the height of rush hour ... hundreds streaming out from the Underground; hundreds more cramming the pavements waiting for buses in the Strand. Down below, District and Circle line passengers were stacked six deep on the platforms, unable to get on already packed trains last night. One said: "I had to wait for 10 trains before I could get on one. The platform was a nightmare, you couldn't move on inch. Everyone was ranting about the congestion charging."⁶⁶

This last statement flies in the face of the reality of the day (it was after all half-term) and appears barely credible. 'I had to wait for 10 trains before I could get one' is one of those statements that people might make in the heat of the moment but is almost uncertainly literally untrue; and the pay-off line - 'Everyone was ranting about the congestion charging.'⁶⁷ - appeared to confirm the notion that the statement about 10 trains was probably not meant to be taken too literally.

Even the lack of traffic chaos did not prevent the paper from seeking to make political capital out of the situation. On the first day of the charge it chose to run a story about the Conservative's candidate for Mayor, Steve Norris, under the headline: 'This chaos will help me become Mayor, says Norris'⁶⁸ - which, given the absolute tranquillity on London's roads, could not be seen as one of the greatest political predictions of the modern era.⁶⁹

Yet at the same time the *Standard*, in its leader columns, continued its guarded support for the scheme:

Today the attention of every major metropolis in the world is focused on our city" it wrote, and continued: "Whether people like or loathe Ken Livingstone, the Mayor deserves respect for the sheer doggedness with which he has pressed ahead with one of the most radical large scale traffic experiments in history."⁷⁰

Such statements of support must have been extremely puzzling for readers on that day, when set alongside the pages and pages of negative news and features that formed the majority of the paper's reporting of the charge.

On the day following C-Day *The Metro* reported that 'the prophets of doom were having to eat their words' but neglected to mention the fact that the paper itself had been one of the main doom-mongers. Georgina Littlejohn (author of *The Metro's* own doom-laden story the previous day) admitted that 'despite predictions of chaos the launch went smoothly'. Her story focussed on the first fines being sent out for non-payment 'after yesterday's launch of the controversial scheme'⁷¹ and suggested that widespread rebellion could still undermine the charge.

Puzzlement (for *Evening Standard* readers) continued on day two of the scheme when columnist Simon Jenkins wrote: 'Mr Livingstone and Mr Kiley have earned the benefit of everyone's doubt. They thought the unthinkable and did the undoable. They delivered a transport policy on time, on budget and without flinching from hysterical media and political attack.' All true not doubt, but one might have expected a former editor of the *Evening Standard* to have noticed that a sizeable chunk of the 'hysterical media...attack'⁷² originated in the very pages of the newspaper for which he was currently writing.

Conclusion

Overall the conclusion has to be that, in the case of the reporting of the introduction of congestion charging in London, the majority of the British media failed in their duty to their audience. However, it was the shortcomings in the coverage by the *Evening Standard* which was probably the most serious. This is for two reasons. First, because the *Standard* aspires to be seen as something more than just one of the tabloid pack. Its owners, Associated Newspapers, describe the paper as setting 'the agenda for the following day's national news'.⁷³ If this is the case then this might partly explain the national media's own shortcomings in their reporting of the introduction of congestion charging.

The second matter of concern about the *Evening Standard's* coverage is the fact that as the only paid-for London-wide paper it has a particular responsibility to report what is happening in the capital in a responsible manner. It would be

difficult to argue that, in the case of congestion charging, this was a responsibility that they fulfilled, or even attempted fulfil in anything other than a wholly partial manner.

Analysing the *Evening Standard's* coverage of the 'traffic lights conspiracy' one finds an almost textbook case of the creation and development of a media myth. It is possible to observe its 'birth', to analyse its metamorphosis from hypothesis through to accepted fact and then to monitor its virtual disappearance. The idea that London's traffic congestion in 2002 had been deliberately created as a means of making the congestion charging scheme appear a success the following year, first surfaced in the *Evening Standard* back in March 2002⁷⁴. It was a stark assertion, based on an unspecified 'source', with no evidence proffered in its support. From this point it became an accepted fact in the pages of the *Standard*, which the paper then invoked to explain virtually all of London's traffic problems.

What appears clear, in retrospect, is that this allegation in fact originated with the Conservative Group on the Greater London Assembly. This was a perfectly legitimate activity for an opposition party to pursue. What is more questionable was the role of the *Evening Standard*; for the newspaper picked up the Conservative's campaign developed and exploited it. But they did so without:

- making clear where the allegation originated,
- offering any evidence to substantiate the allegation
- providing coverage that could be reasonably described as fair and accurate.

The *Evening Standard* is the monopoly supplier in the paid-for London newspaper market and thus has a responsibility to provide Londoners with reliable and balanced coverage of the affairs of the capital. In the case of congestion charging it appears that through much of the build-up to the introduction of the charge, this they failed to do. Their performance in the months following the introduction of the charge, with the exception of the period immediately following its launch, was significantly better, providing Londoners with a reasonably balanced and fair coverage of something which, one way or another, was likely to affect more of the capital's population than any other measure that London's

government has within its power to implement.

On a more positive note, the performance of *BBC London* was praiseworthy. Their coverage was not uncritical but it did provide an example of public service broadcasting at it should be. Both in terms of seeking to reflect what their viewers thought about the charge and providing them with the information they needed once the charge came into force, the BBC scored consistently. For local broadcasters it is very tempting to follow the news agenda set by the local and national press - it is to the credit of *BBC London* that, by and large, this was a temptation they resisted. This resulted in their being able to provide the sort of comprehensive and balanced coverage of congestion charging that their audience had the right to expect, not just from the public service broadcasters but from all the London-wide media.

¹ This chapter is based on a research project funded by the Greater London authority which investigated the media coverage of the London congestion charge. A fuller version can be found in I. Gaber I. *Driven to Distraction: an analysis of the media's coverage of the introduction of the London congestion charge* (London:Unit for Journalism Research Goldsmiths College, University of London 2004)

² *Evening Standard* 17 April 2000

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *The Guardian* and *The Times* 18 April 2000

⁵ Gaber. The research analysed all congestion charge coverage in the national daily and Sunday newspapers, the London *Evening Standard*, the London daily free-sheet *The Metro* and the main bulletins on BBC TV and ITV for London from 1 January 2002 to 31 May 2003.

⁶ The *Evening Standard* reported (26 March 2002) 'The Government is today accused of a dirty tricks campaign in an attempt to sabotage Ken Livingstone's congestion charge. Although they are officially neutral, ministers have been quietly spreading the word that the plan to charge drivers for entering central London will be a recipe for fraud and evasion. One minister told the *Evening Standard* that Britain is "a nation of anarchists" who will stop at nothing to avoid paying the £5 charge.'

⁷ *The Sunday Times* 30 June 2002

⁸ Gaber Chapter 4

⁹ The sole exception was the motoring correspondent of the *Daily Express*, Nat Barnes (at the time the newspaper was attempting to position itself as a left-wing alternative to the *Daily Mail*)

¹⁰ *Daily Mirror* 24 January 2003

¹¹

Evening Standard 29 April 2002

¹² *Evening Standard* 5 July 2002

¹³ *Daily Telegraph* 25 January 2003

¹⁴ *The Sunday Times* 29 September 2002

¹⁵ *The Sunday Times* 21 July 2002

¹⁶ *Sunday Mirror* 14 July 2002

¹⁷ *Sun* various July 2002 to May 2003

¹⁸

News of the World 8 December 2002

¹⁹

Daily Telegraph 8 July 2002

²⁰

Daily Telegraph 25 April 2003

²¹

Mail on Sunday 25 May 2003

²²

Sunday Mirror 14 July 2002

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Sun 29 November 2002

²⁴

The Observer 13 October 2002

²⁵

Daily Telegraph 8 July 2002

²⁶

Daily Telegraph 11 July 2002

²⁷

Daily Telegraph 23 January 2003

²⁸

Daily Mail 22 February 2003

²⁹

Sun 29 November 2002

³⁰

Sun 4 March 2003

³¹

Using the Lexis Nexis cuttings database

³² For technical reasons it was not possible to include *The Metro* in this particular analysis

³³

See Gaber Appendix ii

³⁴

Ibid

³⁵

A detailed analysis of the *Evening Standard's* traffic lights 'conspiracy' can be found in Gaber Chapter 8.

³⁶ *Evening Standard* 19 March 2002

³⁷ *Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly C.M.G.* by Lord Hutton
<http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/report/index.htm>

³⁸ *Evening Standard* 19 June 2002

³⁹

Evening Standard 7 March 2003

⁴⁰

Evening Standard 24 July 2002

⁴¹

Daily Mirror 9 September 2002

⁴²

Ibid

⁴³

Ibid

⁴⁴

Evening Standard 17 February 2003

⁴⁵

Rail March 2003

⁴⁶

Ibid

⁴⁷

All quotes in this section from the *Mail on Sunday* 17 November 2002 and from Wolmar's original article in the possession of the author.

⁴⁸

Rail op cit

⁴⁹

For a full breakdown of the use of quotations see Gaber Appendix 3

⁵⁰

Evening Standard 24 July 2002

⁵¹

Evening Standard 10 October 2002

⁵²

Ibid

⁵³ *Ibid*

54

In S. Hall S. et al *Policing the Crisis* (London: Macmillan 1978) p. 59. He writes: 'the media are frequently not the "primary definers" of news events at all; but their structural relation to power has the effect of making them play a crucial secondary role in reproducing the definitions of those who have privileged access, as of right, to the media as accredited sources.'

⁵⁵ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/> - last viewed 25 August 2004

56

Based on search of Lexis Nexis cuttings database and author's own research at the BBC, ITV and *The Metro* newspaper for period covering January 2002 to May 2003. Such a result is hardly surprising given that in the six months leading up to the introduction of the charge the Committee issued just one press release in its support.

57

The Independent 18 May 2002

58

Ibid

59

Evening Standard 20 February 2003

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Daily Telegraph 31 January 2003

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Mail on Sunday 16 February 2003

62

Daily Mirror 3 January 2003

63

Sunday Telegraph 3 February 2003

64

Mail on Sunday 16 February 2003

65

The Metro 17 February 2003

66

Evening Standard 17 February 2003

67

Ibid

68

Ibid

⁶⁹ Indeed, in the election for Mayor of London in June 2004 Ken Livingstone again defeated Steve Norris, with the success of the congestion charge seen by many observers as one of the key explanations for Livingstone's victory.

70

Evening Standard 17 February 2003

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The Metro 18 February 2003

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Evening Standard 18 February 2003

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Associated Newspapers' website <http://www.associatednewspapers.com/> (viewed March 2004)

74

Evening Standard 19 March 2002