

Rupert Murdoch rehabilitates disgraced CEO

Rebekah Brooks

Paul Mitchell
12 September 2015

In another move calculated to show how he is able to act with impunity, billionaire oligarch Rupert Murdoch, the media magnate behind Twenty-First Century Fox and News Corp, has reinstated Rebekah Brooks as CEO of News UK.

News UK publishes the *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sun* and the *Sun on Sunday* in Britain.

Brooks was editor of the *News of the World* (NoW) from 2000 to 2003, and *The Sun* from 2003 to 2009 before becoming CEO of News International (now News UK) from 2009 to 2011.

In 2006, allegations about News International's illegal hacking of mobile phones and computers began to surface. The following year the NoW's royal editor, Clive Goodman, and a private investigator, Glenn Mulcaire, were jailed for illegally accessing royal mobile phone messages. NoW editor Andy Coulson, who later became Prime Minister David Cameron's director of communications, resigned but denied any wider phone hacking had taken place.

The Murdoch empire sought to prevent the story going any further. However, civil claims by celebrities and politicians and further revelations particularly those regarding the hacking of the voicemails of murder victim schoolgirl Milly Dowler in 2002 and another murder victim, Clare Bernal in 2005, provoked mass revulsion.

The hacking allegations were also exploited by other media groups opposed to Murdoch's £12 billion takeover of the BskyB satellite platform, a move which would have given him even greater profits and enormously increased his political clout.

Brooks eventually resigned as CEO in 2011, and the NoW was closed down, for which she was rewarded with £11 million as "compensation for loss of office".

The phone hacking scandal exposed how successive

governments—along with police officers, sections of the judiciary and others—had bent their knee before Murdoch's court.

Cameron was forced to acknowledge, "The truth is, we have all been in this together—the press, politicians and leaders of all parties—and yes, that includes me."

He added, "During the last [Labour Party] government, a police investigation was undertaken, it was inadequate and not enough was done. There were reports from the information commissioner and they went unheeded. There were select committee reports on phone hacking and there was no follow-up. Throughout all this, all the warnings, all the concern, the government at the time did nothing. And frankly, neither did the opposition."

Two days after her resignation, Brooks was arrested by police on suspicion of conspiring to intercept communications and accused of corruption involving illicit payments to police officers.

Last year Brooks was cleared of all charges by a jury, which accepted her plea of "incompetence". She denied any knowledge of illegal activities during her editorship including more than 540 "taskings" undertaken by Mulcaire or that she was involved in any conspiracy to cover them up.

This was despite her admission that millions of potentially incriminating emails had been destroyed and that News Corp had settled claims worth £268 million to over 700 hacking victims. Coulson was convicted of conspiracy and sentenced to eighteen months in prison, of which he served just five months.

While Coulson and a few others lower down the ladder were given a slap on the wrist, no steps were taken to curb Murdoch's operations. Neither he nor any leading figures within News International were found guilty of any of the crimes uncovered during the

scandal.

While the NoW was branded as “toxic”, leading to an overnight loss of its advertising revenue, forcing Murdoch to shut it down, the *Sun* has continued churning out ever more reactionary filth.

Earlier this year *Sun* columnist Katie Hopkins used the deaths of hundreds of migrants in the Mediterranean as the occasion to spew out a stream of fascist invective. In a column, paralleling those once published by the anti-Semitic Nazi weekly *Der Sturmer* (*The Attacker*), she described refugees fleeing war and persecution as a “plague of feral humans”, “vagrants” and “cockroaches”.

To assert that Brooks was back in business, the first headline in the *Sun* after her reappointment proclaimed, “Wham Bam Thank You Cam”—a reference to Prime Minister David Cameron’s revelations in parliament on Monday that he authorised the extra-judicial assassinations of two British citizens in Syria.

So unabashed is Murdoch that Brooks’ reengagement was announced whilst the Leveson inquiry, supposedly to examine the “Ethics and Culture” of the British press, has to still to complete the second part of its investigation into the activities at NoW.

The Crown Prosecution Service is also considering corporate charges against the Murdoch empire and the House of Commons privileges committee has also to rule on whether three of Murdoch’s executives lied to a Parliamentary select committee.

The rehabilitation of Brooks is further proof that the official structures of politics and the media have become entirely divorced from and openly hostile to the interests of the population. They have become the province of a plutocratic layer that acts without any legal, let alone, moral restraint.

Murdoch is the archetype of a global financial oligarchy which has arisen on the basis of financial parasitism and an unprecedented growth of social inequality and dictates every aspect of political, economic and social life.

Murdoch’s rise to prominence in the UK was predicated on his relations with the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher and its brutal assault on the working class. This was enormously beneficial to Murdoch personally, as it provided the basis for his News International’s infamous union-busting operation at Wapping in London’s East End in 1986.

He cheered on the deregulation of the City of London, privatisations and tax cuts for corporations and the rich from which he benefited more than most.

Murdoch made his money by exploiting a particular type of gutter journalism, that emphasised sex scandals and the exploits of the rich and famous in order to divert the public and encourage the most backward sentiments.

But his right-wing, big business policies were really facilitated by the Labour Party and trade unions, which ditched their old reformist programmes and adapted themselves to Murdoch’s political agenda. Indeed, Murdoch’s first close working relationship with a British prime minister was with Labour’s Harold Wilson after he purchased *The Sun* and *NoW* in 1969.

That relationship became so incestuous under Tony Blair’s administration that Murdoch earned the ironic title, the “24th member” of the Cabinet. During the phone hacking trial, it was revealed that Blair, making reference to the Hutton Inquiry, which had cleared his government of wrongdoing over the death of biological warfare expert Dr. David Kelly, advised Brooks to set up an internal inquiry, along similar lines, which would “clear” her name too.

These relations underscore the travesty of democracy that exists in Britain. Government policy is determined by a clique of billionaires that sets the agenda of all the major parties. It is this that accounts for the ease with which Murdoch has rehabilitated his protégé Brooks, and the right-wing newspapers she oversees, with barely a murmur of criticism.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)