



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 29 June 2010

Session 3

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

13th Meeting 2010, Session 3

CONVENER

*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)

*Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP)

*Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD)

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Stephen Abell (Press Complaints Commission)

Paul Holleran (National Union of Journalists)

Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando (University of Stirling)

John McLellan (Johnston Press)

Dr Gina Netto (Heriot-Watt University)

Professor Greg Philo (University of Glasgow)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

David McLaren

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 29 June 2010

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Margaret Mitchell): Good morning. Welcome to the 13th meeting in 2010 of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I remind all those present, including members, that mobile phones and BlackBerrys should be switched off completely as they interfere with the sound system even when they are switched to silent.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take item 3 in private. Item 3 is consideration of a list of candidates for the post of budget adviser to the committee. Do members agree to deal with that item in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Migration and Trafficking Inquiry

10:01

The Convener: Item 2 is the sixth evidence session in our inquiry into migration and trafficking. This session will focus on migration and, in particular, the media. The committee will hear from two panels of witnesses. The members of the first panel are academics and practitioners, and the members of the second panel are media representatives.

On our first panel, we have Professor Greg Philo, of the Glasgow university media group; Dr Gina Netto, of Heriot-Watt University; and Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando, who is a lecturer in journalism studies at the University of Stirling.

Welcome to the committee. How would you characterise the overall tone of media coverage of migration issues?

Professor Greg Philo (University of Glasgow): I think that it is quite hysterical. Immigration is being used as a political weapon, but it is also being used as a weapon by the media to increase their sales. There has been a consistent campaign about migration and asylum seekers, which has put tremendous pressure on people.

I have a particular interest in the issue of sex trafficking, as it seems to be a classic example of what we might call a moral panic, which seems to have had almost no basis in reality. Before coming to the Parliament today, I drew the committee's attention to Nick Davies's article in *The Guardian* entitled "Prostitution and trafficking—the anatomy of a moral panic", in which he went through the figures and showed that they seem to have no basis in reality.

In its work on issues such as HIV transmission and the Government's AIDS campaign, the Glasgow university media group has interviewed people who are involved in the sex industry in Scotland and elsewhere, and has developed quite close contacts in that area. In the past couple of years, I have interviewed more than 50 sex industry workers. We have been unable to find that sex trafficking is any sort of a major problem. The police's operation pentameter found no more than something like 11 people who were thought to have been coerced into the sex industry. If you think about this as an industry—

The Convener: I remind you that the question was specifically about migration.

Professor Philo: I was talking about sex trafficking, specifically—

The Convener: As we know, trafficking takes in all kinds of issues, such as forced labour, as well as sex trafficking. I would be interested to know your views on migration in general, and how it has been portrayed.

Professor Philo: Overall, migration is a phenomenon of a global economy that has free movement of capital. It is simply impossible to have free movement of capital without free movement of labour. If you have intensive development in some parts of the world and the running down of other sections, the people from the run-down areas will necessarily seek to move, and there is simply no way of stopping them—well, you can attempt to stop them, but it is inordinately expensive to do so. Governments spend huge amounts on border controls and other attempts to limit migration, but people's desperation means that they have to move. In the case of the European Union, in which movement is relatively free, it is obvious that people will do so.

However, when that happens, the media immediately leap on to the issue by saying that local people's jobs are being taken and local services are being stretched. Indeed, there is some truth in that. If a large number of people move to a particular area, that is bound to put pressure on local jobs, medical services, education services and so on. In the short term, migration is probably very good for the economy. At the moment, a large number of highly skilled people are moving from eastern Europe to Britain, which means that those people are in competition with workers in this country—

The Convener: I am going to stop you again, because the question was about the tone of the media.

Professor Philo: Yes. What I am saying—

The Convener: Is the media's reporting of issues to do with migration accurate or is it hysterical, as you said that it was in relation to trafficking?

Professor Philo: It is hysterical, and it does not get to the root of the issue, which is a global economy that forces that movement to occur. As long as you allow free movement of capital, you will have free movement of labour. People who have no choice will do anything in order to move. The media do not address the fundamental cause of migration; they tend to look only at the effects of it, and then they multiply those effects so that there is an exaggerated political and public response that moves towards racism and attacks.

The Convener: Do you think that an in-depth analysis of the problem is lacking in the media? Would you say that there is superficial reporting?

Professor Philo: The reporting is more than superficial, but it is directed at the effects. Some of what is said about those effects is correct. It is true that, if a lot of people move to a particular area, that will strain local resources, especially at the base of society, which means that the cheapest accommodation will be under pressure. An influx of people into a given area will mean that medical services and so on are used more, which will stretch limited resources. That is bound to happen, but that is exploited by the media, with papers running headlines such as "Asylum Seekers Eat Our Donkeys"—that is a real headline from the *Daily Star*—and printing stories in which asylum seekers who have come here because they are suffering abuse or torture in their own societies are jumbled up with economic migrants and with people who are living off the state and are, in a sense, a burden on the state.

The Convener: You are saying that there is an element of accuracy in the reporting, but the issues are exaggerated and there is not enough in-depth analysis—I know that that is quite brief, but we have to move on. Is that a correct representation of your position?

Professor Philo: Yes.

Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando (University of Stirling): Over the years, my research has shown that there are two different agendas in the media in Scotland. One is driven by what I will call Scottish-owned media, and the other is driven by London-based media.

The agenda on immigration and asylum seekers that is exported by the London-based media is not that well received in Scotland. What I am saying is not that there are not elements of xenophobia, racism and prejudice in Scotland but that the way in which news on immigration issues is framed in Scotland is different from the way in which it is framed in other parts of the United Kingdom.

The media sell us a series of notions. That is a big generalisation, but we can say that specific London-based media outlets sell notions to us that refer to immigration and asylum seekers as being an issue or a threat. That is tied to vague notions that working-class people are not that happy with immigration. We saw the immigration card being played over and over again during the most recent UK elections. However, the Scottish newspapers are more responsible. Indeed, when the Scotland-based media have run headlines, articles or television pieces on asylum seekers and immigration that are inaccurate, they have tended to respond more quickly to criticism.

Of course, the fundamental problem is national. There is not really an effective body to control and set boundaries and rules for the print media, which is where such articles tend to be found.

There are two tones in the media. The tone of the London-based media is hysterical and inaccurate, and it edges on the xenophobic and racist. I support what has been said.

Dr Gina Netto (Heriot-Watt University): I concur with my colleagues. To say that the media's tone is overwhelmingly negative is probably a mild way of putting things. The media are ill informed in basic ways. They are misinformed in ways that incite xenophobia, and asylum seekers possibly feel the brunt of things. I do not think that the general public are aware any more of what it means to claim asylum because they have been so confused with stories about bogus asylum seekers and the distinction is no longer clear. I cannot remember seeing a single positive story in the written press about asylum seekers that appeals to people's humanitarian instincts—that tells people about what it means to flee from war and conflict situations—but there seems to be greater acceptance of refugees, and there are positive stories about them.

Perhaps we should distinguish between the written and the broadcast media. I have seen stories on television that at least give views from both groups that work with asylum seekers and groups such as Migrationwatch UK that take a politically far right-wing view of matters, but, in all the years that I have lived here, I have never seen one positive story in the newspapers about what it means to claim asylum. Such issues are important for the vast majority of people in Scotland in particular, as the migrant community is small and people's opportunities to come into contact with individuals from it are limited. Many people pick things up on the way to work when they read free papers such as *Metro* or the cheapest newspapers, which do not engage and are perhaps not informed. I do not know the extent to which journalists are informed about the distinctions between asylum seekers and illegal immigrants.

10:15

The Convener: We will move on to that. I am interested in your comment on needing to tease out the meaning of the word "media", as it covers both the print media and the broadcasting media. I gather from what you say that you think that the broadcasting media are a bit more balanced and perhaps more positive than the print media. Is that correct?

Dr Netto: I cannot say that I have done a systematic analysis. I have had access to both those media forms, but I have not consistently analysed what they have said. Therefore, I cannot categorically say—

The Convener: But is that your impression?

Dr Netto: Yes.

The Convener: What do the other panellists think specifically about the conflation of the different forms of media?

Professor Philo: We have done an analysis. There is a difference between the print media and the broadcast media, particularly at the local level. It will be found in Scotland that local television is much more sympathetic. I have interviewed people who have run television news services in Scotland who have deliberately done stories that they knew would be positive towards asylum seekers in the face of huge opposition from their viewers. They said to me that they got very negative responses to those stories, which, for example, focused on the case of a woman who had been sexually assaulted multiple times in Africa and had come to Glasgow. They interviewed the woman and followed her story in a conscious effort to open up such issues. There is a difference between the print and the broadcast media, but people who produce positive stories are swimming against a very strong tide.

The local papers up here are also a bit ambivalent. They are aware that it is easy to do xenophobic stories about outsiders coming in that can appeal to readers, for example, but they are also nervous about what will happen. They are closer to what goes on on the ground and are aware that asylum seekers and migrants are being attacked in Glasgow and throughout Scotland, that there are consequences to their journalism, and that people get assaulted and killed on council estates, for example, as a result of media panics and hysterical public responses. One thing that the committee might want to talk about is what can be done about that and—

The Convener: We will go on to that. If you do not mind, we will stick to the questions that are being asked. If you answer them, we will systematically cover the issues.

Professor Philo: Sure. No problem.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: Some of the articles that we have produced in recent years have shown that there is a difference between how the broadcast and print media cover matters. The pro-immigration camp has identified three or four newspapers that are particularly bad in setting the agenda. Sadly, those newspapers have a strong influence in defining the news agendas afterwards. There is a difference between the approaches but, if a story about immigration and asylum seekers is strong enough, it will permeate into the other media sooner or latter. It does not really matter much whether the media are more conscious and responsible because, in the end, the rules of the market and how the media have to operate will make people follow the lead on such stories.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): You all agree about the problem of negative reporting, which we recognise as the main problem, I think. However, I am interested in what Professor Philo said at the start, as the reporting of trafficking seems to be a completely different issue. I accept that there is uncertainty and debate about the numbers involved, but we have heard a lot of evidence that a serious problem exists. I am interested in what the other panellists, particularly Dr Netto, think about that aspect. It seems to be a completely different issue from the issue of the negative image of migrants in general. Obviously, the intention is to help and support migrants who have been trafficked. What do the other panellists, particularly Dr Netto, think about the reporting of trafficking?

Dr Netto: I cannot say that I have thought about it. The media pick up that trafficking has a human interest appeal. Trafficking is viewed as individuals being forced into a situation over which they have no control. That is different from issues to do with migration, which is seen as much more of a threat because immigration is regarded as voluntary. By its nature, trafficking involves people being forced.

Negative reporting does not affect just asylum seekers, although they bear the brunt of it. The general public cannot distinguish between asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and those who were born in this country. People of colour come from a wide range of countries, but they are tarred with the same brush and regarded as asylum seekers. That has an impact on community relations at all sorts of levels.

The Convener: Can you briefly say to what extent you think sensationalism plays a part in media reporting of migration issues?

Dr Lugo-Ocando: That kind of news agenda has been studied prolifically. The whole media agenda has become more tabloid in the past 10 to 15 years. It is therefore not surprising to see that migration issues have become more sensationalised, particularly by news editors. We should remember that journalists can write one thing, but what gets published or broadcast can be another. There is space for manipulation of the news, which often happens. We hear terrible stories about journalists who write a story in a certain way and are surprised when they open the newspaper the next day by the tone of how that news is presented.

Immigration is an easy target for the media because immigrants cannot respond to attacks and are very unlikely to raise a libel action against the media. In addition, until recently, the Press Complaints Commission did not recognise collective actions. It is as easy for the media to attack immigrants as it is for it to attack politicians—they are both easy targets. However,

immigrants are an easier target because they have no way of responding. The media can do what they want about immigration issues because they will not get any firm, legal response. They do not even have to pass stories to their legal teams, as they would do for other issues. Immigration is an area in which editors can play openly and be excessive without fear—it is a case of power without responsibility.

Professor Philo: On that point, something needs to be made clear. There is an intricate link between the debates on sex trafficking and economic migration. When the police and state authorities attacked economic migrants through dawn raids and attempted to move people who did not have proper papers, and all that sort of thing, that got a very bad press and there were all sorts of attacks on it. With sex trafficking, the people who get involved in the sex industry, as far as I can see, almost always do it entirely voluntarily. However, under the guise of rescuing people, there continues to be an extraordinary attack on economic migrants who work in the sex industry. Raids are going on all over Glasgow, but the police are not rescuing anybody; what they are doing is busting flats and taking the money of people who are there, which I think they can legally do if a certain number of people are working. The police put all sorts of pressure on people, taking them down to the police station and checking their papers. It is a way of putting all kinds of pressure on fairly vulnerable people and making their lives a misery, under the guise of rescuing them. However, I do not think that anyone is being rescued at all in Glasgow—there is no need for it.

The Convener: Can I remind you that the question was about sensationalism?

Professor Philo: I am sorry, but I am linking the two issues because I think that they are intricately related.

The Convener: We will go on to that later. We have a fairly comprehensive set of questions. I take it then that you would agree that the tabloid press or the press generally are sensationalist about migrant issues. Do you think that sensationalism drives their agenda?

Professor Philo: From the point of the view of the press, there is a desire to sell newspapers. It is a popular story that foreigners are taking our jobs, medical services, school places or whatever else. Xenophobia is an easy way to generate newspaper sales. We can come on to what to do about that next.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): I must say to begin with that there are very different views on sexual exploitation. We have had excellent evidence on that issue in previous

evidence sessions. I am sure that some witnesses regard the lives of some people, particularly the women to whom Professor Philo referred, as a misery and consider that those people need to be rescued. However, I would like to round up here, because part of my question has already been answered. We have heard from the witnesses that the tone of the coverage of migration may be more positive in Scotland than it is in England. Is that the case for regional Scottish newspapers in, for example, the central belt and north-east Scotland? We have heard evidence that their coverage of the issue is different. Are regional newspapers in England different in that respect, too? Is the coverage of migration in London-based or London-owned newspapers different from that of all others? I was interested in what Dr Lugo-Ocando said about why there might be a different tone in such newspapers. Is it that there is no way for people to respond? Is that the nub of the problem?

Dr Lugo-Ocando: Scottish newspapers are more responsible in their coverage than English newspapers are, but that does not necessarily mean that they are more positive. I agree with my colleague Dr Netto's point that there are very few positive stories about immigration, despite the huge achievements of immigrants in Scotland in, for example, setting up new businesses—there are data on that. Scottish media outlets certainly have a more responsible tone and a greater willingness to respond to criticism about their coverage than their English counterparts do. Funnily enough, the difference is that the Scottish media tend to follow an agenda that allows them to sell newspapers. Despite a huge amount of public concern about immigration, it is less of a priority for Scottish voters than it is for those in England. The further we go into Scotland, the more we see that.

I mention in passing that I applied for funding for my research in this area to several funding bodies, but the only people who gave me money to look at the issue were a Japanese foundation called the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. One of the things that my research showed was that stories about asylum seekers, whether negative or positive, are completely absent from the regional press in places such as Perth or Fort William. The further we go into the regions of Scotland, the less concern we see about immigration. Overall, that is because companies and businesses that keep the local economies going are very conscious that, for example, the leisure industry depends on immigration and that local shops now employ Polish people and so on. The news editors in both print and broadcast media realise that. I interviewed several of them for my research and they said, "Look, this is not really an issue for us. This is not really the agenda we're pursuing."

However, the London-based media that operate in Scotland under an umbrella of Scottishness must have in their headlines whatever London tells them to have, unless it is counterproductive for their sales. That is why the London-based media tend to operate in Scotland in such a way that they bring their agenda as a Trojan horse, with the hope that it will mobilise certain sectors in the political establishment that will benefit their interest. The big difference is that the Scottish media comply and can be responsible because their hands are not tied, which is true of news editors in Scotland regardless of their political views. I interviewed people from media that you would consider to be on the left and the right and they were far more responsible than people from the London-based media, who told me, "Look, there's nothing I can do. This is what I've been told to do: I have this space under the headline to put my stories in and it is set by London." For me, that is why there are different tones in the media of the different countries.

10:30

Marlyn Glen: Do you have anything to add, Dr Netto?

Dr Netto: Picking up on Dr Lugo-Ocando's point, I think that there is a close relationship between what the media think the public want to hear and whom they perceive the public to be. That concerns me greatly. There is a tendency for a vicious cycle to develop—if the media think that the public have a negative attitude to migrants and do not want to hear positive stories about migrants, the media will not give a lot of space to such stories. The media are not a neutral force; they embody the prevailing attitudes of society, which leads us to the fundamental problem of how migrants are perceived. If the media think that the predominant attitudes towards migrants are negative, they will not sell positive stories about them because they think that the audience will not be receptive and there is less motivation for them to do it.

There are implications here for how one works with media agencies, the role of leading politicians in relation to media agencies and the role of migrant groups in engaging with media agencies. There is scope for a lot more dialogue and engagement with the media, migrant groups and leading politicians—and not just leading politicians but those in all local areas, because their views are picked up by local newspapers. Particularly in small rural areas, one damaging statement could be picked up and cause a disproportionate impact on a small local area that might be threatened by the increasing presence of migrants without a lot of information to back that up. There are numerous implications for how one needs to work

with the media and enter into a process of engagement with migrant groups that are worthy of focused attention in this space.

Marlyn Glen: Does Professor Philo have anything to add?

Professor Philo: Only to repeat what I said at the beginning, which was that migration is a natural process that follows the global economy and that large agglomerations of capital will attract labour. That is not really a problem for Scotland because there are not a huge number of jobs here that migrants will come and attempt to fill and people know that. You will get small numbers of Polish workers coming to work in hotels and so on, as has been said, but Scotland is unlikely to attract as large numbers of such people as it did in the early part of the 19th century when there were large flows of Italian and Irish workers. That will simply not happen.

What will happen, or has happened, is that any planned movement of people, such as the introduction of asylum seekers, is likely to produce particular areas of stress in areas such as the council estates of Glasgow, Govan or wherever they are moved to. It is the frictions in those areas that need to be dealt with politically. However, as such movements are planned anyway, the situation should be dealt with quite easily, as should public perception. It is politically controllable.

Marlyn Glen: That is interesting because we have heard about changing demographic patterns in Scotland, which mean that we should be encouraging people, particularly younger people, to come and join us.

Dr Netto spoke earlier about the difference in the tone of coverage between the written and broadcast media. Why is there a difference?

Dr Lugo-Ocando: As I said in my first response, the Scottish media tends to be far more responsible in its coverage of immigration than the English media. However, the print media in general—a couple of London-based media outlets in particular—tend to be irresponsible because, as I said before, immigration is an easy target on which to build stories. There are few liabilities in what they write about the subject—they will not be sued by anybody—and it allows them to sell more copies of their newspapers.

I point out a particular difference in the interviews that I did with journalists, news editors and sub-editors in Scotland. One of the things that came out strongly in my research on the Scottish media was that it perceives that there is much more support here for immigration and asylum seekers. In other parts of Britain, it is rare to see what happens in places such as Pollok in Glasgow, where neighbours protect people from

dawn raids. That is interesting in that the editors and journalists whom I interviewed all recognised that difference and understand that they are playing a different ball game here in terms of the news agenda.

I do not accept the often-repeated myth that the people who are most xenophobic are the working class. In fact, many working-class people defend the asylum seekers whom the authorities have tried to deport through dawn raids. That is at the bottom of the distinction between the news agendas—on immigration in general, and asylum seekers in particular—in Scotland and England. To repeat what I said earlier, editors in Scotland are far freer to follow their ethical instincts than are those in the London-based media. It is also the case that they perceive a different reality.

Dr Netto: Not too much should be made of how much better the Scottish media are than the London media. I think that Jairo Lugo-Ocando would agree that there is a low baseline. To say that the Scottish media are better is not really good enough in my opinion.

How much media attention has been given to the changing demographics in Scotland and the need for fresh labour? How much attention has the fresh talent initiative received? A fundamental problem is not being picked up by the press—a problem that has far-reaching and serious implications for care of the elderly and for the whole of society. We have an opportunity to highlight the implications for everybody should there not be a young growing workforce to support society and, to put it bluntly, to support the care of a growing elderly population. That is the responsible thing to do: to not highlight it or indicate the seriousness of the problem is irresponsible.

Marlyn Glen: Will you go back to the question? Is the tone of media coverage better in the broadcast media?

Professor Philo: Yes. I think that we have said that.

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): A number of things are being conflated in this debate. Let me start by making a distinction between journalists and media owners. Increasingly, journalists are one small cog in an international conglomerate. Reference was made to the Scottish media. The second most popular tabloid in Scotland is the *Daily Record*, which is owned by Trinity Mirror Group plc, which is controlled from London. We are missing two things here. The first is that an individual journalist might write a story that is subsequently subbed, or stone-subbed, offsite and the second is that editors' editorial independence might be critical.

How many editors have been removed for not following the owner's position?

My second question concerns positive stories. Do the media give people what they think people want to hear or see, and therefore reinforce prejudices that already exist, or do they instrumentally generate those prejudices by the type of story that they produce?

My third question relates to political involvement. Does, for example, the public announcement that, from 2011, there will be a cap on the number of immigrants send a positive message about immigration and migration?

Dr Netto: There is scope for editorials that have an informed analysis of the implications for Scotland's demographics of the cap on immigration, but the issue has not been picked up. There is scope for good features to be done on what the announcement means in order to educate the public. Potentially, the media have an educative and awareness-raising role to play in creating a more informed electorate that can see the need for distinctions to be made within the UK and for a more nuanced attitude towards immigration. If the media are not informed of the implications of a cap on immigration for all of the UK, especially Scotland, where will informed analysis in editorials and lead stories come from? The implications of such a cap for Scotland should have been a lead story.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: One of the two exceptions that I mentioned was the *Daily Record*, mainly because that newspaper, what used to be the *Scottish Mirror* and other similar newspapers have a specific progressive agenda on the left, even though they are London-based. I do not accept that journalists are completely innocent.

Hugh O'Donnell: I was not saying that.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: It is good to hear that. Before coming to this country, I worked for 16 years as a journalist for international organisations and big news media. Journalists are never as powerless as people think. Media conglomerates have huge power, but there is a great deal of space in which journalists can play and negotiate. In news media outlets, there are always contesting rival agendas. Journalists can play with one of the powerful agendas and see their career progress quickly in a news organisation, or they can do what many honourable journalists do, which is to resist and try to create their own spaces within the media outlet. I accept that there is a distinction to be made between journalists and news media outlets, but journalists are not as powerless in media organisations as people think.

Another issue is the messages that are sent out. You mentioned the cap on immigration. The Government is sending a very negative message,

but it is also sending a conflicting message. It is talking about cutting welfare benefits to some people, because they do not want to work, but it is criminalising another group of people who are so desperate to work that they come here in lorries and accept the most horrendous conditions. Two conflicting agendas are being presented to the public.

10:45

It is regrettable that levels of xenophobia among certain groups of people are equal to levels of rejection and hatred of people who are on welfare benefits in this country. The expenditure and other things that are mentioned are simply not there. I was saddened to hear one of the contestants for the Labour leadership, Ed Balls, say the other day that Labour had got things wrong on immigration and that all sorts of people were coming to take our jobs. In reality, there is no statistical evidence to suggest that wages in Britain have been lowered by immigration. The news agenda is set not only by the media and journalists but by politicians and business leaders. Unless there is a concentrated effort to set an agenda that is different, progressive, thoughtful and comprehensive, we will not have something different in this country. Instead, we will have a lot of resentment, xenophobia and, sadly, street violence and other problems because of people's misperceptions about immigration.

Hugh O'Donnell: Professor Philo, do you have anything to add?

Professor Philo: I do, but it is not good news. When Nelson Mandela came here, he told us to stop stealing his country's doctors. There is another dimension to the issue—the costs of migration to the places from which people come. I can see that a good way of getting our elderly people looked after is to recruit the most skilled, best, most highly trained young people from eastern Europe to come here to do that for us, but that creates the difficulty of what we do with our young workforce.

I know that Scotland's demographics are changing and that this is a small country to which more people can come. However, as members know, there are high levels of youth unemployment in Scotland. I live in the west of Scotland. In places such as Dumbarton, from where the traditional industries have gone, there are many young unemployed people who are not well skilled, trained or educated. There are high rates of suicide among those people, many of whom have no motivation or understanding of work, as they come from third-generation unemployed families. I know that partly from research and partly because my wife teaches those people in schools in Dumbarton. It is a

desperate situation. In a way, it is a fix to bring in the best-trained, mobilised and motivated young workers from other countries to do jobs, but that should not detract from the question of what we do with our young workforce. That is a problem—it is not just a media fantasy.

What Dr Lugo-Ocando said about the lowering of wages is true. However, if a large number of people come in from another country and fill up jobs, it is not true that there are many more jobs for our workers to take—there are not. Scotland has high rates of unemployment, especially among young people and in the west of Scotland. That issue needs to be addressed. That is why I started by saying that some of what is reported is true—it is not just a media panic or fantasy. Some of it is a media construction and can be extremely harmful, but underneath it are real processes that must be addressed.

Dr Netto: I accept entirely what Professor Philo says about unemployment levels among Scotland's young people. The problem needs to be addressed, but I do not see that as being incompatible with encouraging migrants to come here. There are different skills gaps that need to be filled and different levels of employment and education. None of that needs to take away from measures to address the unemployment problems among young people in certain parts of Scotland; the two can go hand in hand.

A more nuanced understanding of the labour market in certain parts of Scotland is needed. There is a reason why migrant workers get jobs in certain parts of Scotland but not in others. At a meeting that I attended, a leading executive from the Confederation of British Industry said that, when he wanted to fill up his factories, he began by looking in his own area but could not find there anyone who was willing to work. Then he got a Polish workforce, which doubled productivity in his factories, so he was pleased. He did not have particularly strong views on migration—he just wanted a full workforce and was looking for anyone to work in his factories, so that the factories would work.

There are issues to do with the exploitation of migrant workers, because if people are desperate enough to work anywhere, they will take jobs that nobody else would take, but there are also issues about how labour is regulated in the industries in which migrant workers work in various parts of Scotland.

As far as I know, there is not stiff competition for the jobs that migrant workers are filling. In that sense, I agree with Dr Lugo-Ocando that they are not the jobs that young people in Scotland are looking for. Perhaps they have high expectations and they are not willing to work in the industries in which other workers are willing to work.

Hugh O'Donnell: Thank you for that. I am interested in Dr Philo's position, because he suggested that highly skilled, trained and motivated people are coming to this country—I cannot disagree with that—but he then conflated that and connected it to the unemployed youth that we have in various bits of the west of Scotland. Those seem to me to be two distinct groups of people, and connecting them is one of the dangers of some of the media coverage of the migration issue and the unemployment issue. I suspect that there are not too many highly skilled, well-trained brain surgeons on the streets of West Dunbartonshire—or anywhere else—looking for a job, but there are certainly hospitals in the UK that do not have them. We need to be careful in thinking about that.

Secondly, I did not get an answer to my question about whether the media give people what they think they want or whether the media influence what they want.

Finally, you seemed to suggest earlier that there have been killings as a result of media activity. That is a radical thing to say. Do you have empirical evidence for it?

Professor Philo: I have sat with journalists who have pointed to racial attacks on migrants that followed particular waves of agitation in the press. A producer from Channel 5 told me that he thought that there should be prosecutions for inciting violence because of what had gone on in the press and some of the media coverage.

One of my PhD students is studying the impact of media coverage. He is interviewing the police, looking at particular instances of media coverage and examining attacks on people in local areas. It is difficult to draw exact links because we cannot prove that the person who carried out the attack had read the paper that morning; I do not think that such levels of proof exist. However, it would be wrong to say that the hysterical climate that has, at times, been generated about asylum seekers has nothing to do with the number of attacks on them. If we were to err towards one side in making a decision on that, I would say that media climates absolutely have a real effect on the streets.

Dr Netto: Hugh O'Donnell asked whether the media fuel prejudice or prejudice already exists. That is a good question. To me, it raises the issue of whether the media are aware of equal opportunities policies. Do the media train their staff in those policies or are they completely commercial organisations? Should they be required to comply with equal opportunities policies and legislation? Should there be training for all new recruits, senior management and industry leaders in the media, or are they seen as completely private organisations? Of course,

private organisations should also comply with equal opportunities policies and legislation, but that is perhaps even more important in the media because of the tremendous influence that they have on people's attitudes.

The Government spends a lot of money on social cohesion and on efforts to improve deprived communities and encourage them to work with each other. However, engagement with the media to try to cultivate a more responsible attitude and a more informed basis on which to work—one that is informed by equal opportunities policies—is lacking. There is a vacuum at present.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: If the media always gave people what they want, everybody would be publishing *Hello!* magazine. What we have is a complex process in which there is only a thin process of negotiation between what the public wants and the construction of the agenda. It sometimes takes a lot of bravery to set up a different agenda, but it has happened and does happen.

One mistake that we make is that, just as media generalise about asylum seekers, we generalise about the media. The media form a complex and diverse universe in which very different processes take place. In some cases, the anti-immigration agenda gets into the newspapers because there is a particular interest of a particular political sector to increase the numbers of voters. In some cases, it gets there because it sells newspapers. In other cases, it gets there by mistake. There are different reasons. Theresa May has just announced that people will have to seek permission to marry an immigrant and that immigrants will have to speak English. Many people want to hear that type of rhetoric. It sells newspapers, but it is absolutely wrong.

Hugh O'Donnell: I agree.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: Of course, the discourse permeates lower down.

As an anecdotal example, I have lived here for 11 years and I have three kids who were born here—they say, “Aye, Dad”; they are completely Scottish—but I am still called an immigrant. One of my best friends who moved to where I was born—he is originally from York—and has been living there for 10 years is called an expat. That distinction exists in different languages. What I am trying to show with that anecdote is that the matter goes much deeper than the narrative that is exposed by the media. The media are perhaps the tip of the iceberg in a problem that we have to tackle in our society. It is not necessarily the case that the media give people what they want to hear. Sometimes, because of the market reality in which they exist, they have to operate with that language. In some cases, as I said, they do so for

other reasons. The important thing is that we can do something about it. It is not true that we can only sit passively and leave all the narrative to just flow and stay as it is.

The Convener: That brings us to our next question. I am conscious of the time. I have allowed quite a lot of latitude to develop the various questions, but if you could be quite succinct for the final batch of questions, that would be much appreciated.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP): Jairo Lugo-Ocando mentioned an iceberg. The media—let us be honest about it—like a bad news story, and not only on immigration, because they think that it sells. Talking about icebergs, the Titanic is still being brought up—not actually brought up, but it is still being mentioned in newspapers 98 years later. If the Titanic had made it over to New York, nobody would have talked about it at all.

Is it possible to look for some positives? How can the media be encouraged to report the positive contributions that migrants make to our society and their positive impact? We do not expect every newspaper to be like *Hello!* magazine, but would it be beneficial if journalists and editors consistently had positive meetings with migrant communities and found positive things to draw out?

Dr Netto: That would be a positive step. The presence of media at cultural events such as the Mela would be a big step, because it would make the media more accessible. A process of engagement needs to be entered into between the media and migrant communities so that the media are informed. Migrant organisations have told me that even when they tell the media about events that they are holding or positive initiatives that they are introducing, the media have sometimes shown little interest in them or have not picked up on them. It might well be that, as you say, they prefer bad news stories to good news stories. There must be engagement and I think that a positive step would be to encourage individuals from migrant communities to work in the media, or to take a more welcoming, inclusive and encouraging approach to minority ethnic involvement in the media.

11:00

The Convener: I ask the witnesses to be succinct in their responses.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: Interestingly, the aim of Oxfam's asylum positive images project, in which I was involved from the beginning, was to create a network in this respect because although a lot of people in Scotland are doing very interesting and positive things they have very few resources and are dispersed all over the country. One of the

project's main objectives was to build bridges with the media and we invited the then head of the Press Complaints Commission to be involved. As a result of that and of various interventions and actions through a similar project in Wales led by Professor Terry Threadgold at Cardiff University, the PCC for the first time enabled whole communities to ask the print media to correct certain stories.

To be frank, I think that one of the problems for the print and broadcast media is access to the right sources. The anti-immigration camp is very well organised and very good at lobbying—you have only to think of, for example, MigrationWatch UK and Sir Andrew Green. Because it has the sources, the resources, the phone numbers and the e-mail addresses and can put up a very good front, it gets access easily. We should say it like it is: the anti-immigration camp is very strong, very well structured and can articulate its point of view very well, while the pro-immigration lobby, which includes migrants and asylum seekers, is not very well organised, simply because it does not have the resources. As a result, a newspaper editor in any part of the UK who wants an interview with someone about a specific story will find it hard to get access to that source.

In fact, I discovered in my research that even when people seek to train asylum seekers in talking to the media, the asylum seekers tend to say, "I don't want to talk to the media, because what I say will be used against my family back in Zimbabwe, Afghanistan or wherever." The anti-immigration camp is a well-structured powerhouse of lobby groups mobilising various political sectors, while those who are involved with pro-immigration and pro-asylum seeker groups have scarce resources and find it very difficult to access the media.

Dr Netto: Which is where the politicians come in, because if politicians—

The Convener: We will come on to that.

Professor Philo: I do not quite accept to the same extent the pessimistic view that has been expressed of the audience. After all, in Scotland, almost 50 per cent of young people go to university. A very sophisticated audience is being developed and I honestly do not think that they all want to read *Hello!* For example, in the international media, Home Box Office produces very sophisticated television programmes such as "The Wire" for highly intelligent and very well-educated audiences—and does so along market principles. There is an audience for more intelligent and thoughtful journalism, and it is bound only to increase as a result of the growth in higher education. I could go on about this, convener, but I realise that you want us to be brief.

Secondly, I agree that there is a shortage of brain surgeons and that people who are so trained will always find a niche. However, the 1 million or so people who moved in the large-scale migration from eastern Europe have been the skilled and semi-skilled people in those societies, and the fact that they have taken unskilled workers' jobs in this country has created pressure among unskilled workers. For example, on Charing Cross Road, I was served coffee by two very nice Polish women, both of whom had law degrees. That is the kind of thing that you are actually facing.

I do not think that that is such a big issue in Scotland, because the lack of jobs means that millions of people will not be coming into the country. However, one crucial issue is the public profile of asylum seekers. Media productions tend to present the group as anonymous, threatening and strange—in other words, the image is of a large group of people called asylum seekers. Politicians can humanise such images, present people as individuals and give those groups a more sophisticated public profile. Very large numbers of these people are highly educated—in fact, they are very often the journalists, the architects and the planners of their own society.

My wife, who taught in a school in Sighthill that had large numbers of asylum seekers, found it extraordinary: the Glasgow children were swinging off the lightshades, while at the front of the classroom there were three rows of children—the asylum seekers—who were listening to every word and writing everything down. They were the children of the middle classes in places such as Iraq; indeed, my wife said that it would be like moving all the children of Bearsden to Iraq. As has been said, within one generation, these people will have learned perfect English and will be the doctors or whatever, and they need to be humanised.

I guess that I am thinking of the moment when Princess Diana intervened—

The Convener: I think—

Professor Philo: Just give me two seconds. I am thinking of the moment when Princess Diana kissed the AIDS person, which suddenly changed people's attitudes to AIDS. I am not suggesting that politicians should go and kiss asylum seekers, but they need to meet them, create the kind of contact that Dr Lugo-Ocando was talking about and put that into the media. We need to say, "Look, these groups are making enormous and valuable contributions" and create the media stories, the photo opportunities and so on that will help with the process of humanising these people and help others to understand the kind of contribution that they are making.

The Convener: The Oxfam submission says that we need stories about real people, which I think was what you were saying in a less than brief way.

I must call for brevity, as we have now gone over an hour and there is another panel to come. I should say, however, that your information is vital and very much appreciated.

Malcolm Chisholm has a question about the role of politicians. I cut Dr Netto off earlier because I knew that we would be talking about the issue in depth.

Malcolm Chisholm: As Dr Netto raised the role of politicians, I invite her to make any general comments that she might wish. My specific question, however, relates to what the current Scottish Government and the previous Government—the Scottish Executive—have done with regard to pro-migration campaigns such as the one Scotland, many cultures initiative and anti-discrimination policies in general. What impact have they had on public attitudes and media coverage, which is obviously the main issue that we are discussing, and should the Scottish Government and politicians in general be doing more to inform and educate the public?

Dr Lugo-Ocando: Yes. As part of my research, I examined and assessed the Scottish Executive's one Scotland, many cultures campaign and interviewed several people from TNS, the company that was hired to assess it. The campaign itself was very interesting and positive and, indeed, was particularly important because it was the only such campaign in the UK. That is something to be very proud of.

As with many campaigns, however, it was not really networked to the rest of the effort on this issue, although one positive impact was that the Parliament passed anti-discrimination legislation to support it. The people who came up with that campaign thought it through, but it had limited resources and was confronting a much greater campaign against it by certain tabloids and media outlets.

We all remember the commercials from the one Scotland, many cultures campaign, such as the one that showed the guy sending a racist joke from his computer, and the one about multiplicity and diversity in Scotland. That campaign was confronting a huge anti-immigration campaign at that time, which was portraying very negative stereotypes. One problem was that no one seemed to recognise and pinpoint that negative portrayal as a campaign; it was being sold as a legitimate news agenda when it was just another propaganda campaign. We need not only to promote our campaigns but to identify the other

campaigns and highlight to people that they are racist and xenophobic efforts.

Dr Netto: The one Scotland, many cultures campaign sent out a strong, positive message, which was welcomed. It seems to have disappeared—we have seen much less of it—but there is a need for that message to be sustained, strengthened and perhaps made more specific.

What does the phrase, “one Scotland, many cultures” actually mean? Perhaps we could emphasise catchy messages such as, “one Scotland, many cultures, one workforce” or “one Scotland, many cultures, no place for racial abuse” to draw attention to the implications and make them clearer to the general public. Such campaigns are important and have a powerful role to play, but I fear that they might be threatened by all the cuts that we face.

With regard to the role of politicians, community organisations have said that leading politicians often say very positive things—all the right things—when they meet minority ethnic communities, and are welcoming and inclusive. However, those organisations say that the Scottish Government often hides behind the distinction between reserved and devolved powers on certain issues.

Despite immigration being a reserved issue, it is within the Scottish Government's power to do a number of things for minority ethnic communities in devolved areas such as health and education. All the key public services are in the domain of the Scottish Government. Positive statements can be made about migrant organisations and communities, not only at events where a number of migrant communities are assembled but at more general events that are attended by people who are not migrants or from minority ethnic communities. That would carry more weight than speaking privately to those organisations when they assemble in large numbers.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: That issue relates to what Greg Philo mentioned with regard to asylum seekers.

One of the big problems for asylum seekers is that they are not given the right to work. I know that that is a reserved area, but allowing them to work would be a straightforward way of humanising them and allowing them to integrate into the community by offering their services. As Greg Philo mentioned, many asylum seekers are doctors, nurses and lawyers—they are very well-educated people. The evidence for that is not only anecdotal: people's background can be seen in the statistics on asylum claims.

The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government have done interesting things in that area. For example, asylum seekers have the right

to go into universities, which is a distinctive measure. The legislation still falls short and could be improved—there are loopholes by which the Student Awards Agency for Scotland refuses to fund certain asylum seekers because of their age, for example, which is discriminatory—but it is a huge step forward in improving the conditions and the news agenda in general.

We have a couple of asylum seekers studying at the University of Stirling. If those people are granted refugee status, they will have a level of education that will allow them to integrate very quickly; if they are not, we are doing a fantastic favour for the country to which they will return—we will be helping to improve the conditions in countries such as Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, because they will have more doctors, nurses and lawyers.

11:15

The Convener: Did Christina McKelvie want to add something? The issue has been covered to a large extent.

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): Yes—I would like to pick up on quite a few things.

I would love to see the day when some of our daily newspapers had an equal opportunities policy imposed on them; the transformation would be fantastic. The issue of contrasts interests me. A few months back, a national newspaper that has a Scottish edition appeared to take an almost schizophrenic approach to asylum. On the front page it had the usual “Bogus asylum seeker ate my hamster” type of story, while on the back page it had a wonderful story about a young man who was an asylum seeker, and who had signed for Celtic and was playing for Scotland. That was in the one newspaper.

We should compare that with the article in this week’s *Big Issue* on mass immigration to Scotland and the dawn raid watch campaign by Jean Donnachie. One of the main aspects of such campaigns is the number of children who have been involved.

I was involved in campaigning for the Ay family and a number of other families, and the main activists have been the kids, so I take real exception to Dr Philo’s description of kids from Glasgow and Scotland. As far as I can see, they are absolutely wonderful. When they get involved in situations like that it improves their ability to be the wonderful proactive citizens that the world needs, because they gain understanding and compassion.

I am in schools all the time, and I do not see kids swinging from the lightshades. We are trying to get away from stereotypes on asylum and

immigration, so I hope that we can get away from stereotypes of kids who are just normal kids, as far as I am concerned.

The immigration cap really concerns me. As an active politician, I know about the issues from the work that I do, the events that I attend and the papers that I write. Can the panel contrast and compare some of the stereotypes and tell us what politicians should be doing?

The Scottish Government has done wonderful things in stretching the devolution settlement. If there are other things that you think we should doing, please tell us.

The Convener: I will give Professor Philo the chance to respond directly, given that his comments were mentioned.

Professor Philo: I was not saying that all Scottish children are bad—I have two wonderful Scottish children who are absolutely brilliant. I am saying that there are areas that have long-term unemployment, such as Dumbarton in the west of Scotland, which have very high rates of distress among young people. They are unskilled, and there are high rates of unemployment and youth suicide; there are also very high rates of alcohol and drug abuse.

Of course that is not all the children in Scotland, but we should not turn away from the issue of what we do about communities like that. We need a huge amount of active intervention and development to help those people to train and reskill.

Some young people live in a family in which no one has ever worked. I am sorry to go back to practical experience, but I know a lot of people who teach and work in those schools. Their experience is uniform; it is intensely difficult to get children motivated for careers when they say to you, “We’re just going to go on the buroo”, because that is what people there have always done. Now, that is not all the children in Scotland; there are wonderful, marvellous kids in Scotland—as I said, my kids are fantastic—who will fight for the rights of asylum seekers in the way that you described. However, the problem of intervention has to be—

The Convener: Perhaps I can help you out a little. We understood the tenor of what you said, which was that in your experience the children of migrants appreciate education and buckle down to work, which is not necessarily the case with Scottish pupils, although of course that is a generalisation.

Professor Philo: The same point was made earlier. A large number of children of asylum seekers—

The Convener: Your point was that such children can be positive role models and that the media should take account of that.

Professor Philo: Yes, and that such children are likely to be from families who have a huge amount to offer. Politicians can focus on that, so that asylum seekers are humanised and regarded as people who can contribute a huge amount, instead of being regarded as an outside group and a threat.

Dr Lugo-Ocando: The subject of children is more neutral and seems to gain more consensus. In 1936, the only people who were being persecuted by the Nazis whom we allowed to come into Britain were children—we sent their parents back to be gassed in the gas chambers. We should be careful about distinguishing between parents and children; both are wonderful and make fantastic contributions to society.

I take Greg Philo's point, but I want to comment on the idea that people who come into the country are overloading public services such as hospitals and schools. If you ask any teacher, they will tell you that after two or three months a kid will be speaking English perfectly and will be completely integrated into the class. Most of those children's parents, whether they are Polish, Latvian or whatever, will be paying taxes and using hospitals very little. There needs to be a balanced view.

The problem of unemployment and social exclusion in places such as Dumbarton and Glasgow will not be solved by putting a cap on immigration. If numbers are capped, people in such places will not be immediately drawn into jobs in hotels and industry in Scotland. Those people are unemployed for a complex set of social reasons, which will continue to exist regardless of what happens in relation to immigrants.

Dr Netto: On the question about pressure on education services, Dr Lugo-Ocando talked about how quickly migrants' children learn English. Such children also bring to the classroom much knowledge and experience of different parts of the world. My son attends Bruntsfield primary school, which collected good stories on migration from children from all over the world, under the title, "Migration Stories". Such work increases understanding and pupils' first-hand knowledge of children from many different countries and backgrounds, which enables children to become global citizens. There is no doubt that Scotland aspires for its young people to be global citizens who can work freely across cultures and in many different industries.

Migrants have health needs, like everyone else, but they are also employed by the national health service and they contribute in that way. Perhaps when politicians consider migration and migrant

communities they need to highlight the positive aspects and benefits of migration, instead of always talking about pressure on services. Education and health are two key services—housing is a third—in relation to which the Scottish Government has fully devolved powers, so there is much scope for positive action.

The Convener: Given that we have a panel of academics before us, I will allow a brief question from Stuart McMillan on the historical media coverage. I ask for brevity in the replies, too.

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): Have there been studies of media coverage of immigration after the second world war and during the 1950s and 1960s, when people came to the UK from the West Indies, India and Pakistan, in particular? Is there a marked difference between coverage then and now?

Dr Lugo-Ocando: Greg Philo's Glasgow media group has probably done more than anyone else to compile data on the issue. In my study, we went to the archives and looked at the historical portrayal of the issue. We found a lot of similarities between how the media covered Jews, Gypsy/Travellers and what they called Caribbean communities and how the media covers immigration today.

As the academic Paul Gilroy has said, there are intrinsically post-colonial elements in the narratives that we find recycled again and again in the newspapers. Of course, the debate on genetics and race—the eugenics debate—is over, but that type of narrative has come back in a different guise. We can find interesting historical connections between the narratives and portraits in the post-war media and those in today's media.

There have been changes. For example, the pro-Labour newspapers' narrative on immigration used to be very negative, but that has changed over the years. However, in general it is possible to find historical links between post-colonial ideas about superior races and the narratives that are reflected in today's media—I am reminded of Berlusconi saying in a press conference that European culture is superior to all other cultures.

The Convener: Do the other panel members want to comment?

Dr Netto: I have nothing to add to what Dr Lugo-Ocando said.

Professor Philo: I am happy with his response, too.

I add that I am a multiculturalist. I am entirely happy that people come here from every part of the world and I agree that the children of migrants can enormously enrich classroom experience. The difficulty is that new issues and new movements of people require new resources, and there is

currently a question about how such resources will be generated.

As Jairo Lugo-Ocando said, new migrants often do not have particular health needs, because they are young and fit and so on. However, that situation lasts only until they have babies. As the committee knows, most health care requirements relate to children or the elderly. Ultimately, migrants have the same needs as everyone else has, so we need to plan for and resource care.

People fight over resources, particularly housing. There are lots of issues to do with people saying that asylum seekers are taking their houses. Such issues need to be addressed. I am not in any way departing from a multiculturalist's perspective when I say that there are real problems, which we should not forget about.

The Convener: Thank you. We have had a frank and robust session, which could easily have filled twice the amount of time that was available to us. If there is anything that the witnesses did not get an opportunity to say or on which you wanted to expand, please submit the information to the committee. We will be pleased to receive it. Thank you all for attending.

11:28

Meeting suspended.

11:35

On resuming—

The Convener: The second panel of witnesses comprises media representatives. I am pleased to welcome Paul Holleran, the national organiser for the National Union of Journalists in Scotland; Stephen Abell, director of the Press Complaints Commission; and John McLellan, the editor of *The Scotsman* with Johnston Press.

You might have heard some of our exchanges with the first panel of witnesses. How would you characterise the overall tone of media coverage of migration issues?

Paul Holleran (National Union of Journalists): Given the committee that we are at today, it is ironic that there is so much stereotyping of the press and lots of generalisations that the media are just one body or one unit. You must take into consideration the fact that there is a wide diversity of quality and opinion in the way in which the media works. I differentiate strongly between the quality newspapers that we have in Scotland and some of the tabloids, which have less of an eye on their responsibilities as publishers and journalists.

In the previous discussion, the difference between the English-owned press and indigenous

Scottish papers was mentioned. I think that that difference is marked. One of the earlier speakers said that we should not get carried away by that difference, but it is important to highlight the work that has been done in Scotland by the media and organisations such as the NUJ, the Scottish Refugee Council, Amnesty International and Oxfam. They have worked with both the previous Scottish Executive and the Scottish Government to develop a dialogue with the media and journalists on asylum, immigration and trafficking.

The NUJ got together with those organisations and a number of years ago we produced two or three sets of guidelines. That work was initially funded by the Scottish Executive but we took over the full funding ourselves so that we could remain independent. We have distributed the guidelines to the Scottish press over a number of years, and there has been a positive response to the details that they contained on use of language and contacts for different asylum and refugee groups. The guidelines have been taken on board, and they have had an impact.

Scottish editors feel a stronger responsibility to the community in Scotland, and they are very important to what finally ends up on the front page. As Hugh O'Donnell said, a journalist may write the article, but that might not necessarily be the finished product that ends up on the front page, and the journalist might not necessarily determine the headline. The broadsheet papers in Scotland certainly have a different view of the community and how Scotland's society works, and that should be noted.

The Convener: It would be interesting to see the guidelines, but my question was a general, scene-setting one about the overall tone of the media.

Paul Holleran: I do not think that you can say that there is an overall tone. Some papers that are produced and delivered in Scotland are sensationalist or use headlines that do not necessarily reflect the story's contents. I have copies here of articles with scaremongering headlines, although the copy has positive content—I can give you examples of that.

Some papers have a political angle to push. Some of them might have supported Oswald Mosley in the 1930s, and we can see a similar angle these days. Others are slightly more objective and constructive in the way in which they portray the issues.

The Convener: Would it surprise you to know that, out of 16 articles quoted in annex B to our paper, only one was positive? That sample ranged across *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, the *London Evening Standard*, the

News of the World and the BBC. There was quite a variety, but only one was positive.

Paul Holleran: I am not totally surprised by that. However, there are also many positive articles and I was a bit surprised that none of the previous witnesses identified them. John McLellan will be happy to talk about the role that *The Scotsman* has played this week in discussing immigration. There are good analysis pieces in some of the more high-brow papers.

Two weeks ago, I presented awards at the annual Oxfam press awards. Among the media that received awards were *The Herald*, the *Evening Times*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *The Courier and Advertiser* in Dundee, Scottish Television and Radio Clyde. They had produced articles and pieces that accentuated the positive role of immigration and asylum seekers in society.

Positive work has been done. It just needs to be expanded and the news about the work that such organisations do needs to be spread. Events such as this evidence-taking session can bring that to the fore.

Stephen Abell (Press Complaints Commission): I have one point of clarification before I answer your question, convener. You referred to this panel of witnesses as media representatives, but I make it clear that I am not here to represent the media. The PCC is a self-regulatory body. Editors sit on the commission but they are a minority; the vast majority of people who are associated with the PCC are not from the industry. In some of the things that I say, I will not seek to represent the media at all.

The Convener: Thank you for that.

Stephen Abell: Tone is a slightly difficult matter for the PCC. Our essential interest is accuracy, but we can affect tone by dealing with complaints about accuracy. We issued some guidance on reporting on asylum seekers a few years ago. What we sought to emphasise in that guidance holds true now.

The use of terminology and the factual basis for stories are matters in which the PCC can and should be involved. We get many more complaints now than we got five years ago. We are trying to make ourselves more accessible—Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando referred to that—and we welcome complaints from third parties about issues of general fact. Concerns can congregate around various issues—mental health reporting is another good example—and we welcome complaints about accuracy on those issues, which can lead to our having an impact on editorial decisions in the newsroom.

It is not really for the PCC to set the tone. It would be an undue restriction of freedom of

expression for us to tell a newspaper which tone to adopt. Our role is to deal with accuracy, which can affect coverage more broadly.

The Convener: Thank you for that. I ask John McLellan to comment from the editorial point of view.

John McLellan (Johnston Press): I largely echo what Paul Holleran said. Scotland is fortunate to have a broad diversity of printed media and radio. Also, non-mainstream media increasingly play an important role in disseminating information.

Like Paul Holleran, I think that it is difficult to throw a blanket over the whole of not only the Scottish media but the London media. I am sure that some members have reservations about the ownership of *The Times* but the paper's tone is different from that of *The Daily Telegraph*. It is, by and large, a responsible publication that produces quality journalism from Scotland and London.

Ultimately, people choose what best suits them, which is why we have diverse media. The question whether the press leads or reflects opinion is a nuanced issue about which we can argue without reaching a successful conclusion—apart from concluding that it is impossible to tell. There are times when the media attempt to lead opinion and others when they reflect it. It is often difficult to predict where the two will merge.

Papers that do not reflect what people think will quickly find themselves in difficulty. If papers that attempt to lead do not get that right—if people are not prepared to be led—they, too, will find themselves in difficulty. If everybody wanted to read a quality newspaper that went into depths of analysis and provided lots of balanced arguments, *The Scotsman* would sell an awful lot more newspapers than it does.

11:45

The Convener: I will explore that point further. Oxfam's submission refers to the "shrinking media landscape" and says that the opportunity to go into the complexity of migration issues is no longer available. We are talking about two forms of media—broadcast and print. I ask you to comment on that aspect. If you are restricted in the way that has been described, to what extent is sensationalism impacting on newspaper sales and dictating the content of articles?

John McLellan: I try to avoid using the term "sensationalist"—I would describe such reporting as more popular and direct. There is no shortage of opportunity in Scotland for migration issues to be debated at great length and for all elements of the debate to be explored.

Earlier, the comment was made that nobody covers migration properly. As I said to my colleagues, *The Scotsman* has two pages on migration today. Our main leader is on the subject and makes the points, which were made earlier, that Scotland is distinct from the rest of the country and that migration has been and will be good for Scotland. However, even the witnesses who talked about media coverage of migration were not aware that the subject was very much part of a mainstream publication today. I have not read today's *Herald* in depth, but we have lost count of the times that papers such as *The Herald* cover such issues in great depth, with balance and with the opportunity for all sides of the argument to be represented.

I and my colleagues at *The Herald* cannot drag people to read what we produce. As far as I can recall, at the popular end of the market, the *Daily Record* has always had a positive agenda on migration matters. There is no shortage of places and easily accessible platforms where such issues can be thrashed out.

Paul Holleran: A strong argument relates to the shrinking market. In some ways, less opportunity is available for investigative journalism. That might be a general statement, but local papers—from microlocal papers such as weekly papers right up to daily papers—probably have fewer investigative reporters than they used to have. People are not given the same time and they experience more pressures to fill space in a hurry. New systems are being adopted and there are lots of commercial pressures. You should take cognisance of that.

At the same time, as Jairo Lugo-Ocando said, journalists have some power and can go looking for stories—that applies to all those to whom we handed awards two weeks ago and who were represented at that event. Those journalists sourced their stories themselves—they went looking for human-interest stories that were published in the mainstream media. Journalists have responsibilities and opportunities to pursue such stories, even though they are under more commercial pressure and fewer journalists than ever are working in Scotland.

Marlyn Glen: It seems clear that coverage in Scotland is recognised as being more positive than that in England. Why is that the case? Paul Holleran talked about the NUJ's work. Why is similar work not being done in England? If it is being done there, why does it not succeed?

Paul Holleran: Stephen Abell mentioned mental health issues. We have worked with the Press Complaints Commission to develop guidelines on mental health and suicide issues, as we feel that the media have certain responsibilities. My colleagues in England will smile when they hear this, but we have always given a lead in that field

in respect of standards of journalism. Going back over a century, journalism in Scotland has always raised standards and been renowned for being more radical. We have a sense of wanting to maintain quality, and that includes in relation to ethics.

I chair the Scottish Qualifications Authority committee that considers the content of journalism higher national diploma and certificate courses. We have worked closely with universities and colleges that are part of that group to ensure that ethical reporting on such issues is part of the courses. Journalist training includes a number of modules covering the issues. We speak to the colleges and universities, as John McLellan does, to highlight the importance of skills and ethics. We have done a lot of work in that field. We have been invited to Westminster and the National Assembly for Wales to explain why we are much better than our colleagues south of the border.

Stephen Abell: Our interest is in the UK as a whole. One slight shift in the way in which the PCC works in the past couple of years involves training in which we go into newsrooms to discuss past cases and lessons learned with journalists, picture editors, sub-editors and editors, to try to get improvement. That work will be increased. We are seeking to push it out, starting from journalism students, whom Paul Holleran mentioned, all the way through to working journalists. We did that relatively recently with titles here in Edinburgh, but we want to push it out across the board. We can and should do more training using positive examples from any area of reporting.

John McLellan: I have nothing to add.

Marlyn Glen: I hope that that did not sound too self-congratulatory.

I move on to the difference between the broadcast and written media. John McLellan mentioned radio, which we have not said much about. In general, is there a difference in tone between coverage by the written media and that by the broadcast media?

John McLellan: It is difficult to tell. I hardly get time to watch the telly these days. It depends which part of the press you are talking about. Television is tightly controlled—more legislation applies to it than to the printed media. The printed media go from the *Daily Express* at one end to the *Daily Mirror* at the other, with many places in between. We occupy different spaces, so it is not possible to make a like-for-like comparison of tone between the BBC and the *Daily Express*, STV and the *Daily Mirror* or whichever other bits we want to compare. The essence of the press is that it is free and diverse. People have 19 daily newspapers to choose from. It is impossible to compare the press, TV and radio.

Marlyn Glen: It is interesting that you say that there is more control over television. That takes us to the question whether there should be more control over the written media.

John McLellan: No. There we are—next question.

Stephen Abell: From a regulatory framework perspective, the Office of Communications code and the editors code that the PCC enforces touch on many issues to do with accuracy, but the main difference is that, because of historical licensing reasons, Ofcom can deal with issues of taste and decency, or what it calls “harm and offence”. It has the ability to shackle broadcasters to an extent on broad matters of taste, which can affect tone. Historically, the press has always been removed from that, because newspapers are free from governmental influence—a freedom that they exult in to an extent. Because there is a central right at the heart of democracy for greater freedom for the newspaper industry, the PCC cannot intervene on issues of taste and decency. Broadcasters’ programmes have historically entered people’s homes and been freely available—although things are changing in the landscape all the time—which is why Ofcom can intervene in matters of taste and decency, whereas the PCC cannot. The PCC argues that it should not do that. That is a major distinction between the regulatory frameworks for TV and the press.

Paul Holleran: Obviously, there is a historical aspect to this. When licences were last handed out to independent television companies, the companies had to agree to meet certain standards. The licensing authority was quite strict on that. Public sector broadcasting still has that requirement, but the NUJ is concerned that regulations may be watered down or diminished in future, particularly given the development of digital convergence. I am thinking about the opportunities that the web presents, along with local television. The standards that apply to quality broadcasting need to be maintained. The NUJ in Scotland has successfully persuaded the union as a whole—the NUJ covers the United Kingdom, Europe and Ireland—to change its policy in terms of extending the work of the PCC and Ofcom so that their approach is more like that of an ombudsman. Editors do not like the thought of any further regulation—although, in most cases, there is no need for more regulation. Most editors and newspapers are responsible enough; they know the law and the moral standards well enough not to overstep the mark. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Where there is an abuse of power or editorial control, the editors and proprietors leave themselves wide open.

A closer look should be taken at extending the complaints procedures of the PCC and Ofcom. We

suggest some kind of merged authority, whether it be a press ombudsman or another such body. That will be essential in future, particularly given the number of cases I deal with of web abuse—articles that appear on the internet that are racist and inflammatory. We are looking at the issue but, given the convergence to which I referred, politicians, the media and the PCC need to look at it a bit more intently.

Hugh O’Donnell: I will avoid treading on any questions that might be waiting down the line by going off on something of a tangent. Do you agree that there has been a dumbing down across the print media? I am thinking of some of the red tops and those of that nature but that are not red topped—papers in which paragraphs are 15 words long and words have no more than one syllable. Academics have estimated that the output of those papers has a reading age of about eight. If we look at the broadsheets, we find a similar move downwards with an estimated reading age of about 14 or 15.

My question is on editorial versus advertising. Do commercial newspapers have to provide for a demographic that suits the needs of advertisers? If so, to what extent is that reflected in the newspaper’s position on any issue, but particularly on migration and trafficking, asylum seekers and refugees? Where do those pressures operate? The press is a one-way communication medium. Unless a publication actively seeks out an individual from whom they have received comment, they are not obliged to take on board that comment. The opportunities for a minority sector of society that may not have English as a first language to engage with the press are constrained. How do we resolve that? There was quite a lot in that. Does anyone want to have a go?

12:00

Stephen Abell: I will deal with the part that I think that I can speak to. You are absolutely right—vulnerable groups are often the people who have the least access to the establishment in whatever form, including newspapers. However, given the way in which newspapers are going, with the prevalence of online dissemination of information, we no longer have the great monolithic institutions giving information as a one-way message—the situation is changing all the time. A comment piece on a website can have a trail of 200 comments at the bottom, some of which are conversations between the author and the readers. The newspaper industry is having to recognise that it is no longer a one-way street. It is having to have a dialogue with its readers and its readers are supplying a certain amount of content; therefore, the conversation is much more present.

There is an onus on the PCC to ensure that we contact asylum groups and other vulnerable groups and speak to people who might represent them, including MSPs and MPs. One of the central functions of the PCC, which we want to increase, is to give a voice to people who otherwise would feel impotent in the face of powerful institutions such as the media. The function of the PCC is to enable people who cannot deal with problems to do so—that should be the on-going purpose of the PCC. If a person struggles with English or is from a community that does not understand how the system of regulation in this country works—it can be complicated and daunting—our job is to knock down as many barriers as we can and make ourselves available. We are advertising a bit more and have a 24-hour helpline for people, but we must try to get ourselves out there more. The position is not perfect and more work needs to be done. You are right to say that we need to focus on getting to people who might need our help. That is a job that we need to carry on doing.

John McLellan: You make a number of points. I will start with ads. If I could get more of them, I would. I cannot get enough of them. If there were more ads, the paper would be bigger and there would be more stories in it. As it stands, Scotsman Publications Ltd is just about in profit. We will make a small amount of money this year, but we do not make anything like the money that we used to. The majority of our revenue comes from ads; so, the more of them that we can get, the better.

We do not change our policies in order to get ads—we are not influenced by advertisers. I remember losing thousands of pounds' worth of advertising from a well-known second-hand car dealer because we had conducted a review of car dealers and that organisation did not like the way in which it had come over in our piece. Thousands of pounds' worth of advertising subsequently disappeared from the pages of the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman*. At no point did anybody from our advertising department come and say, "What can we do to rectify this?" The advertising department recognised that what we had done was legitimate journalism and that the fault was the overreaction on the part of the advertiser. We just took the hit and, eventually, it came back and started advertising with us again.

Advertiser pressure is exaggerated, although there are times when advertiser pressure can be brought to bear. A few years ago, there were stories about Celtic in the *Daily Record* and there was a threat of motor advertising being withdrawn, but it ended up in the removal of the editor. I cannot remember the detail of it. Whether that was right or wrong, it certainly happened—as much because there was such a falling out between Celtic Football Club and the *Daily Record* as there was between prominent supporters.

As for dumbing down, I have great difficulty in accepting that newspapers have dumbing down to the extent that you might think. Is the language in papers from all parts of the market sharper? Yes, it certainly is. If you look at a copy of *The Scotsman* from 50 years ago, you will see that the language is pretty arcane and it is difficult to get to the nub of the stories. Is today's style dumbing down? I am not sure. Is the work of a modern novelist dumber than the work of Thomas Hardy? No, it is just different. Language is different; it has moved on and evolved. Across a broad spectrum of newspapers, different approaches are taken in order to reach different parts of the market. I do not recognise the statistics that you cite about reading age levels. I would love to see where that research came from—that would be very interesting. That must be set against educational attainment. I do not know the exact numbers, but lots of children are going into secondary schools barely able to read and write, and to read something at an age level of eight would represent a significant advance for some of those people. Standards are indeed different now, but I am not sure that they have slumped to any great extent.

Paul Holleran: I am not saying this just because John McLellan is here, but the commercial pressures, linked with falling advertising revenues, have had an impact on the size of papers, and that restricts the quality, quantity or level of analysis in the stories and features that newspapers can carry. *The Scotsman* has improved the quality of its journalism over the past three or four years. I cannot say the same for *The Herald*, unfortunately.

John McLellan: Thanks.

Paul Holleran: You can buy me a pint later, John.

I am seriously worried about *The Herald*. It has made some drastic cuts and changes, introducing editors who have led the paper to a dumbing down, with a reduction in the number of high-quality columnists, writers and specialists. *The Herald* has not had to face up to the same problems as Johnston Press or *The Scotsman*, which have found themselves in financial difficulties for commercial reasons and because of problems that they have had with banks.

Newsquest, on the other hand, still has an 18 to 20 per cent profitable return, and it is still making lots of money out of its newspapers—yet it continues to make cuts and to reduce the number of journalists and specialists. The number of sub-editors has come under attack. To me, editors suggesting that we can do without sub-editors is a frightening scenario. It would keep the man next to me busier than ever with the number of complaints that would come in if we reduced the number of

sub-editors. There are people who are arguing for that. Fortunately, one of those people has just left *The Herald* and has gone to the *Sunday Post*, so it will be their problem now. There are difficulties in that area that are tied to dumbing down. It comes down to the pressure to cut budgets.

There are implications for society if our best papers cannot operate on the scale that they should be operating on. That is the problem.

The Convener: I should point out that several of the inquiries that the committee has carried out have been reported very well and sensibly and without any sensationalism by Lucy Adams in *The Herald* so, although I am pleased that *The Scotsman* is getting some good press, I would not like to—

Paul Holleran: I was not asked about that; I was asked about dumbing down. The levels of accuracy and positive reporting in *The Herald* far surpass anything that can be found elsewhere. If I had been asked about that, I would have said that, but I was asked about dumbing down.

The Convener: Okay—thank you for that clarification.

John McLellan: I am grateful for Paul Holleran's support, but I do not share his view about the overall tone and content of *The Herald*. I agree entirely with the point about Lucy Adams. *The Herald* still has a core of strong specialists who report exclusive stories on a daily basis, which the likes of yourselves will read with regularity. I agree that, like us, *The Herald* has experienced some significant issues over the past few years but, as far as the core purpose of the committee is concerned, I do not think that those things have necessarily impacted on the subject of your deliberations.

The Convener: Let us return to the main line of questioning.

Hugh O'Donnell: To clarify this for Mr McLellan, I was interested in the delivery of a readership demographic that suited a particular level of advertising. Do you want readers who will buy Ladas or readers who will buy Bentleys? What pressure, if any, do requirements of that sort have in relation to how stories and editorials are structured? I am guessing that your answer will be pretty much the same: that they do not influence it at all.

John McLellan: No; quite the opposite, in fact. Like every other publication, we are attempting to appeal to a particular niche in the market and the more Rolex wearers and Bentley drivers that we can get, the better. It has to be said, though, that there are not that many of them in Scotland. Nevertheless, we make our story choices based on what we perceive to be our marketplace. For

example, Gina Netto, who gave evidence earlier and whose kids are at Bruntsfield primary school, is in our target market. We want those people to read *The Scotsman*. Similarly, we want them to be talking about nothing else outside the gates of Malcolm Chisholm's former school—

The Convener: I think that I will stop this line of questioning because, interesting though it has been, it is really not adding much to our discussion on migration.

Hugh O'Donnell: May I ask another question, convener?

The Convener: If it is very brief and directly related to our discussion.

Hugh O'Donnell: It is. I want to ask the PCC how many times it has proactively contacted MSPs about issues for which it is responsible. I also point out, as an observation, that the websites of most newspapers and, indeed, the BBC are controlled by moderators. Communication is still substantially one way; there is no free flow of information.

Stephen Abell: My understanding is that a lot of the regional press cannot afford to pre-moderate; instead, they post-moderate—

John McLellan: Actually, the very clear advice from our lawyers is that we should not pre-moderate, because it leaves you open to libel action.

Stephen Abell: When we become aware of a story in which there might be significant press interest we contact the relevant representatives, including MSPs. For example, when earlier this year there was a story in Scotland about teens committing suicide by jumping off a bridge, we got in contact with the local MP and council to find out whether we could do anything to help. We do that all the time; in fact, we will be coming to Holyrood in September to speak to MSPs.

A really good point that we might have lost sight of over the years is that MSPs and MPs represent constituents and we are interested in getting ourselves across to those people. We need a better relationship with MPs, not necessarily in relation to how you are reported—which is important—but how your constituents are being reported. It is perhaps less true in Scotland, but as a result of the expenses scandal in Westminster the relationship between MPs and the press has become very difficult. However, on immigration—which I think is a really good area in this respect—I would say to all MPs and MSPs that we can work with them to give a voice to people who do not have one. We are really committed to that. Indeed, I will give you my number and suggest that any time any of you have a problem in representing

your constituents, you should give me a call straight away. We will be very keen to help.

Paul Holleran: One of the many questions that Hugh O'Donnell asked was about access to the press. We have tried to work with the Scottish Refugee Council and Oxfam to use asylum seeking or exiled journalists living in Glasgow on an advisory basis to look at quality, carry out research and so on. I find it quite ironic that one of our members from Cameroon, who helped me to present last week's Oxfam press awards, was arrested on Friday and faces deportation tomorrow. This guy—and his wife—were beaten up and tortured because he exposed corruption in the Cameroon Government. He came to Britain and managed to secure sanctuary in Scotland. Despite the fact that he has been here six years and has been working on a voluntary basis with us, Citizens Advice Scotland, Oxfam and the Scottish Refugee Council, he will be deported tomorrow if we cannot stop the process today.

Not only is that an indictment of this country's immigration service, it shows that we are missing the opportunity to use these people and bring into play their expertise on relationships with the press and their invaluable knowledge of the lack of press freedom in other countries. Stopping those people from working in this country as journalists on any scale is a major problem for us. As I say, I find it ironic that a man who last week handed STV an award for a report on its handling of immigration stories is now facing deportation.

Stuart McMillan: How many complaints has the Press Complaints Commission received about the coverage of migration and trafficking? What percentage is it of the overall number of complaints that the PCC receives? Finally, what is the balance between complaints from Scotland and complaints from elsewhere in the UK?

12:15

Stephen Abell: About 10 per cent of the total number of investigated complaints are about the Scottish press. It is rather harder to get a specific figure for complaints about immigration, because we do not necessarily categorise for every subject matter in every article. In broad terms, over the course of a year we probably get 200 to 300 complaints about immigration across the whole of the national press, which can increase if particular articles cause particularly large numbers of complaints, as does happen. It is a significant figure.

Some complaints have been made about discrimination—we have a clause in our code on discrimination in order to stop prejudicial reporting of individuals and people have come to us and said, "This report is discriminatory more generally."

We used to push them away and say "Well, that's not really what the code says." Now we redirect them to complain about accuracy. Often, if someone thinks that a piece is discriminatory, they actually mean that it is misleading or distorted. Headlines are a good example of that, because they can distort the original story in a way that creates a shift in tone.

So there are significant numbers of complaints about immigration, but not an overwhelming amount. They have probably reduced in the past couple of years. It is rather difficult to give you a specific figure, because we do not categorise the subjects of articles. If you like, I can try to dig up as much as I can on the issue, but it is not something that we readily search for ourselves.

Stuart McMillan: Has categorisation been discussed in the PCC in terms of providing a clearer and more informed picture?

Stephen Abell: Statistically, we must work on the area to try to make ourselves clearer about all the different cases that we deal with. For example, in the area of terminology, we monitor the whole press for the use of the phrase "illegal asylum seeker", because it is nonsense and an oxymoron. If someone is an asylum seeker, they are in the process of determining whether they can come to this country, so they are not illegal or otherwise. About three or four years ago, we started scanning the whole newspaper industry for that phrase. When we see an example of it that has not been complained about, we write to the editor and say, "Actually, that is wrong. Can you stop it happening again?" The number of examples of that phrase has decreased. It has been used in Scottish papers only a couple of times in three or four years. The number of examples has gone down gradually as we keep our process going. We will carry on doing that for as long as possible because "illegal asylum seeker" is a rare example of a phrase that cannot be right in any context. The phrases "illegal immigrant" and "failed asylum seeker" can be correct in certain contexts, so it is much harder to search for their incorrect use. We focus on "illegal asylum seeker", and the usage has gone down, although it is an on-going process.

Stuart McMillan: What about the term "bogus asylum seeker"?

Stephen Abell: That term can often be used in a misleading fashion, and we have taken complaints about that. Intrinsically, of itself, it is not necessarily automatically wrong—for example, someone could pretend to be fleeing for humanitarian reasons. There are certain circumstances in which we can imagine the term being used correctly. I am not saying that it always is, but it is very hard for us to take a snapshot look without knowing the full circumstances and

whether its use is definitely wrong. We take complaints about the term, though. Bodies such as the Refugee Council and the SRC have come to us and said, "Have you seen this article? This is factually wrong." We accept such complaints and deal with them.

Stuart McMillan: I have one further question for Mr McLellan. You said earlier that advertising revenue has no relevance to how a newspaper is written. At what point, then, would a newspaper change its stance or editorial policy? Would it be due to a decrease in daily sales? Or would it be due to an increasing level of complaints from members of the public about things that have been written in the newspaper about asylum or immigration issues, or anything else?

John McLellan: From my position, it would certainly not be due to declining sales as such, otherwise we would change editorial policy every day. Once we have gone down a particular path, it is quite difficult to diverge from that. However, public opinion or market opinion certainly guides what we attempt to do and whether we think that something will be received well or otherwise. It is not the be-all and end-all, but we take cognisance of what is happening out there among the public. We attempt to lead and to reflect—it is a dual process.

The ultimate test is whether something is sensible and defensible. We often do something that we know will not be popular but which we believe is the right thing to do. That remains part and parcel of what we are about. I will give a good example of a case in which it would appear that a paper that I edited was flying in the face of public opinion and continues to do so—the trams. The Edinburgh *Evening News* came out and said that the trams would be good for Edinburgh. I do not think that you would meet a taxi driver or a member of the public who would say that, but I still believe that ultimately, despite all that has happened, the trams will be a good thing for Edinburgh. Although that is not as emotive an issue as immigration, it is an example of a case in which we took a position that I knew would probably not command a majority of opinion because I felt that it was the right thing to do.

It is a complicated issue. If a paper realised that it was doing something that was clearly wrong, it would change. As an industry, we are far less afraid to hold up our hands and admit that we get things wrong than we were in the past. Twenty or 30 years ago, admitting that they had got something wrong was the last thing that an editor would do; they would do anything to avoid letting people know that something was amiss. Now, however, the prevailing attitude—as I think Stephen Abell will bear out—is that we will correct mistakes and move on. We accept that things go

wrong and that corrections need to be made without getting too hung up about it.

The Convener: It was brought up directly by members of the first panel that migrants are an easy target because conflation of terms means that the press are less open to legal challenge or to complaints. Would you like to comment on that?

Stephen Abell: I do not think that migrants are written about because they are held to be an easy target. They are one of many vulnerable groups of people, and one of our aims must be to connect with vulnerable groups of people. I mentioned people with mental illness and how they are covered. That is another group of people whose members would probably find it difficult to make a proper complaint. The onus is on us to ensure that they have a voice.

Paul Holleran mentioned the work that he has done with the Scottish Refugee Council. We need to maintain such relationships and build on them. Four or five years ago, we started to create closer links with the council. I was interested to read the submission from Oxfam about the work that it is doing. We can connect with that organisation so that if it has concerns about reporting, a channel is available through which it can come to us and represent the people concerned. There is no doubt that we face a difficulty when it comes to people who, for very good reasons, are not necessarily so engaged with the system, but that puts greater responsibility on us to try to engage with them.

Bill Kidd: Let us try to be positive. As I said to the first panel, the media frequently print terrible stories that sell papers and attract attention. The general public must quite enjoy reading about bad things because it boosts newspapers' sales when something terrible happens and there is a black border round the front page.

Could we adopt a positive approach and encourage people to be more aware of the positive impact that migrants have on our society and the positive contribution that they make? Might journalists and editors benefit from regular meetings with migrant communities with a view to finding such stories and encouraging those communities to interact more with newspapers and other media? It might even be possible to encourage more migrants to look for work in the media, which might help to balance the messages.

Paul Holleran: I made the point that asylum seekers who are experienced broadcasters and writers and award-winning journalists who have exposed injustice in their own countries are not allowed to work here, so changing that would be a step in the right direction.

Quite a bit of work has been done. We work with organisations such as Oxfam and the SRC, and we involve a lot of the people who have media

skills in the NUJ and encourage them to expand on those by providing training. Bridges are being built, but we can always do more. As Stephen Abell said, there are always opportunities to engage further and have those conversations.

On whether bad news sells newspapers, circulations are falling everywhere, so perhaps editors have the wrong idea in that regard. Perhaps there is just more bad news than good news at the moment.

John McLellan: I was Mr Good News in the *Evening News*. We had a good news day, and it put sales up by 7,000. We thought, "This is a good idea; we should do it more often". We did it again and we got nothing out of it, so we have tried.

Bad news sells newspapers—"Titanic reaches harbour safely" would not have been much of a newspaper seller. Newspapers have nuances of good and bad news, but it is true that people tend to remember the bad news. We all remember planes hitting buildings; that is just the way it is.

It cannot be denied that opportunities to recruit from any group in society are good—it is good for us to be exposed to as many views and opinions as possible.

Paul Holleran mentioned the pressures on us as individuals. It is true that as senior staff have become thinner, the opportunities for us to get out and about are fewer, but the ability to get out and talk to people is something that we should guard. It is about more than whether we get a story out of it—such engagement and community liaison is part and parcel of senior editorial staff duties, and we need to preserve the time to allow us to do that.

As for recruitment, it would be good if we were able to say that we could take on more diverse people to feed into our pages. However, as was mentioned earlier, there are a lot of people out there who are available for work but cannot find it. The world is awash with people who have journalism qualifications. The production of people with journalism skills but who have nowhere to go is a big issue that goes beyond the immigrant community. It is a major issue for our industry, as Paul Holleran will tell you.

Bill Kidd: To follow up on that, annex B of the clerk's paper contains a list of—mostly fairly outrageous—headlines from newspapers. I mean no disrespect, but perhaps we should have got the editor of the *Daily Mail* to come in and answer to some of them.

John McLellan: I am sure that he would have enjoyed it.

Bill Kidd: I want to ask Stephen Abell about such headlines, such as "Aids-infected asylum seekers 'overwhelm UK hospitals'". Such

headlines appear in major national newspapers. Does the PCC intervene, or does it have any power to do so, when such rubbish appears?

Stephen Abell: When was that headline published?

Bill Kidd: It was from the *Telegraph* in 2003.

Stephen Abell: We can and do intervene. Headlines are important—they have to be balanced against what is in the article, and we have to make that assessment. We have certainly upheld complaints against newspapers for distorting a story through the headline to the extent that it becomes misleading. We can deal with complaints about headlines; we get quite a few. The PCC discusses that issue a great deal, and is willing to make decisions and to criticise editors for using distorting headlines. It is a live issue and an area of concern for the PCC.

12:30

It is not really the role of the PCC to get positive stories into papers; however, a complaint to the PCC can be the beginning of a relationship between an organisation and a newspaper, although that is not always the case. Recently, a hospital started making complaints about a newspaper. Complaints were answered through the PCC. Eventually, the two sat down and asked, "Why are we having these problems?" and found a way through them. That will not always happen and I would not suggest that everything in the garden is rosy, but I would say to organisations that represent vulnerable people that the PCC can be used to get in contact with an editor. When an editor is challenged on what has been reported, asked for reasons why it was reported, made to justify their position and, if they have got something wrong, made to correct it, the two can eventually build a relationship in which the organisation can ask, "Why don't you run a positive story about us?" We are keen to foster that where possible.

Paul Holleran: Malcolm Chisholm asked what politicians can do. There is a role for them in respect of some of the horror stories that we read in the newspapers. I have an example here, which I have now doodled all over. It is from the Scottish Daily Mail and the headline is, "42,000 ... That's the number of migrants who poured into Scotland last year, leaving key services buckling under the strain". The journalist interviewed a politician, who said:

"It is difficult not to sympathise with people from Eastern Europe who come here to work in low-paid jobs to better themselves when so many of our indigenous population are prepared to lie in their beds all day accepting benefits."

The article then goes on to talk about Scotland's policy of trying to attract people here to get the

population up. The politician was Bill Aitken. He was asked a question and he said that we are trying to attract people to come and work here. So, the paper had to run a story that bore no resemblance to the headline. If all politicians maintain their position and explain that we are trying to increase the Scottish population and attract the right people, that makes it more difficult for the papers to distort the situation.

The Convener: That leads us nicely on to Malcolm Chisholm's next question.

Malcolm Chisholm: I apologise, as I must leave the committee to attend a meeting about trams—I am sure that John McLellan will not object to that—so I will leave the questions about the role of politicians to Christina McKelvie. I am tempted to ask a different question, as we have an editor here. Sticking with the same issue, what factors influence the line that you take on an issue? As everyone is praising *The Scotsman* today, I should say that it is my favourite morning newspaper because it contains a range of views. Although I disagree with a lot of its editorial lines, it takes the right line on this issue. How is that line established? Some people might think that *The Scotsman* would take a different view. Is it your decision or the owner's? Is it a collective decision? What influences the position that you take on the issue?

John McLellan: It is not the owner's decision. We are a plc and are owned by pension funds and whatnot. The commercial management of Johnston Press plc has no bearing on what we do editorially, nor does the management of The Scotsman Publications Ltd, which is the group that controls *The Scotsman*. It is a bit of both. Ultimately, the editorial line is what I believe is the right line, taking into account the facts. The interpretation of the facts is obviously up for debate, as is how one fact is set off against another, but we have an inclusive approach and we sit around our conference table to discuss what line we are going to take on a particular story. We will thrash out what a particular revelation or fact means and how we should project the story.

As far as asylum seekers and immigration are concerned, my view is that it is an almost wholly positive story. The history of migration into the United Kingdom and Scotland has been almost entirely positive, from the Huguenots up to the Poles and the eastern Europeans of recent years.

Whenever we talk about this issue, the thought at the back of my mind is always that we should not go in for the knee-jerk reaction "Immigration bad. Let's do what we can to get the fences up."

In our discussion yesterday about what we will do with the issue, we decided that our line would be basically that migration is a good thing so we

should argue against arbitrary caps. Such caps are introduced for populist consumption rather than to deal with the reality on the ground, which is that migrants tend to be people with get up and go. They also tend to bring positive attitudes towards the country that they come to and so should be welcomed for what they contribute.

Christina McKelvie: I will ask the question about the role of politicians, but I will tie it to a question about some of the language that is used both by politicians and by the media. I tend not to use the term "asylum seeker" now because of the negative connotations or innuendo associated with that term. Instead, I tend to use the term "people seeking sanctuary", which I think defines the issue clearly as what it is. With that definition, I am interested in separating out the two issues of immigration and asylum, which are two completely different issues.

What concerns me is that some newspapers go down the route of using headlines such as—this appears in annex B of our paper—the now famous *News of the World* headline "Killer migrants—40 per cent of murder charges go to foreigners", which appeared in May. Again, that gives negative connotations to the word "migrant". In the run-up to the election, the previous Secretary of State for Scotland wrote a piece in which he used the term "illegal asylum seekers". Therefore, there is an issue with the language that is used both by the media and by the politicians.

The previous Scottish Executive and the current Scottish Government have done many things to try to change how we welcome people to this country. We have tried to encourage migrants through initiatives such as fresh talent and the one Scotland, many cultures campaign—although I did not like that tag line, because it was not, to be honest, very reflective. How do we bring to the fore those good things that the Scottish Government and the previous Scottish Executive have done so as to try to wipe out the use of negative language by politicians and the media?

John McLellan: Regular usage is probably as important as anything else. Without going into specifics, I think that it is possible to detect how things have changed over the years and how references are altering. As I mentioned, newspapers have changed and reflect the way that people read. The removal of negative connotations from regular print usage is perhaps as important a way as any of changing verbal usage. It all helps.

Stephen Abell: Sadly—obviously, not sadly but correctly—the PCC's role has no direct impact on what politicians can say, but I agree that terminology is very important. We recognise that terminology is an issue that we need to work on constantly in dealing with complaints. We have

issued guidance on the importance of correct terminology, such as the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker, which is very clear and is not difficult to understand. When complaints come in, we need to focus on what we say to the industry about the importance of terminology. I think that we can do that and we will continue to do that.

Everyone has a role. One thing that emerged from listening to the previous session is just how complicated the issue is and how it touches not only all parts of society but what we define as society. There is no silver bullet but, if each sector and each individual tried to do a little bit more, we would start to see change. I think that the PCC has a role to play in dealing with the terminology that is used by newspapers. However, as has been pointed out, sometimes newspapers are responding to things that have been said by politicians, which newspapers also have a responsibility to do.

Christina McKelvie: Just on that point, I wrote to the newspaper that printed the article by the previous Secretary of State for Scotland to challenge his position, but it did not print my letter.

Stephen Abell: Come to the PCC.

Paul Holleran: I reiterate what I said about the guidelines that we produced. I do not claim all the credit for the change, but they have established a slightly different culture, in which people consider their use of words and terminology. We work closely with the PCC on several subjects such as mental health and suicide, which are linked to immigration and asylum seekers.

At the weekend, I was down in Liverpool to visit my family. Liverpool has major problems with suicides and mental health problems among immigrants but is nowhere near where we are in terms of dealing with those issues in the press and understanding that terminology and reporting can have an impact on people's mental health. That needs to be continually worked at and expanded.

Christina McKelvie: Should the media and politicians do that work together?

Paul Holleran: A joint approach should be taken.

Christina McKelvie: It should be a joint responsibility.

Paul Holleran: We believe in partnership and in sharing the responsibility. The Government, the unions, bodies such as the Refugee Council and organisations such as the PCC and the Society of Editors are willing—the issue is just having the time and the right strategy to expand what is positive and the argument on the responsible use of language.

John McLellan: The changes in how suicide is reported provide a good example, although they do not relate specifically to terminology. The choose life campaign operates up here, and how suicide should be covered is embodied in part of the PCC code, which is well ahead of the law. The code does not give us in Scotland too many difficulties, but it causes great problems for English newspapers because of the inquest system, in which the minute detail of every suicide—no matter what the circumstances might be—is played out in a public court and is a matter of public record. The PCC has enshrined it in our code that newspapers are not entitled to report the fine detail, which could result in copycat action, even though we are legally entitled to report such detail. The PCC is ahead of the game on that.

In Scotland, we have taken on board the points that the choose life campaign has made and we are mindful of our responsibilities. We would not want not to report tragic events such as the double suicide on the Erskine bridge, but we do not want to encourage others to follow what was done. The experience of Bridgend is a perfect example of how one case can lead to another. We are mindful of our responsibilities to ensure that what happened in Bridgend never happens here.

Paul Holleran: An improvement has happened. Almost any newspaper office or library has files of papers that go way back to the start of the 20th century. Even in the 1960s, some of the language that was used in papers—for example, racist terminology—is beyond belief when we think of where we have reached now. I accentuate the positive—the use of the word “negro”, for example, has stopped in papers, whereas such words were still used not long ago. We are making progress.

The Convener: I thank all the witnesses for attending. It has been novel and not entirely unpleasurable for us as politicians to be on the other side of the table from media representatives and the PCC—we note the distinction. I hope that, if nothing else comes from the evidence session, awareness of the term “migrant” will be greater and that an attempt will be made to do a little more analysis of exactly who we are talking about when we refer to that body of people.

12:44

Meeting continued in private until 13:04.

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