

BAJ NEWS

£480,000

Sacked Seven's compensation victory

BAJ has won nearly £480,000 compensation for seven members in a series of unfair dismissal cases against rotten employers.

In six of the cases, a settlement was reached on the eve of tribunal hearings. In the seventh, a settlement was reached after lengthy grievance proceedings.

The employers concerned tried to get away with it as long as they could.

The compensation is substantial, but compensation is no substitute for a job. In each case, members were deprived of their career and livelihood in unpleasant circumstances.

Six cases involved redundancy. The seventh involved constructive unfair dismissal over being demoted.

Successful though the litigation has been, it should be the last resort for BAJ and members. Journalists must

start to stand shoulder to shoulder to stop sackings in the first place. An injury to one should be an injury to all.

If employers would only offer decent severance terms, enough volunteers would come forward to avoid the nastiness. If only employers would treat others as they treat themselves...

The cases were handled by General Secretary Steve Turner and harristers at Outer Temple Chambers in London.

MGN CASE LOST

THE East London Employment Tribunal has rejected BAJ's claim that MGN did not consult meaningfully over the 45 proposed redundancies in January 2006. BAJ brought the case to try to win extra compensation for redundant colleagues. There were several important errors of fact in the judgement. As BAJ NEWS went to Press, the union was taking legal advice over a possible appeal. Full report next issue.

Below are potted versions of the seven cases. The cases are anonymous because the newspaper companies concerned insisted on members signing confidentiality agreements before they got their money. The employers obviously wanted to hide their shame.

The compensation in the seven cases is in the region of £30,000, £65,000, £85,000, £30,000, £150,000, £100,000 and £20,000. The amounts cannot be mentioned in the actual stories because of legal constraints.

The differences in compensation relate to service, age, salary, circumstances and different employers.

Case 1: Our member was very good at her job, but her jealous boss did for her when redundancies came along. The boss's amazing main complaint was that she wouldn't get the teas or sit near him.

Case 2: Our member had been a senior executive for many years. The Editor appointed someone over his head and expected him to put up with demotion. He became ill and left.

Case 3: Our member was kicked out without a penny when economies were instituted. Why no severance package? They said he was a casual. Some casual! He'd worked at the paper every week for seven years.

Case 4: Our member was just four weeks away from having a baby when she was made redundant out of 10 journalists. Never mind that her work had always been highly praised.

Case 5: Our member is, rightly, still angry that his boss fabricated criticism of his work to justify making him redundant.

Case 6: Our member worked nights. She was rung up at home on her mobile during the day and made redundant. The boss said her work had been outsourced to another company. She should have been consulted beforehand under the law.

Case 7: Our member worked full-time for four years without a contract. Then he was told he wasn't wanted any more. The paper tried to fob him off with a "best possible" £7,600.

Read the full stories on the centre pages.

Bosses made to pay for their crimes

£50 BOUNTY FOR FINDING A RECRUIT

WORRIED about the cost of winter fuel bills? Let BAJ help you out!

Just recruit a friend, colleague or relative who is a journalist and £50 will be in the post pronto.

Members can have as many £50s as they can find new members. Persuade 10 colleagues to join us and you'll have £500 by return of post. And so on.

A membership form is enclosed with BAJ NEWS. If you need more than one form, simply copy the enclosed form or download one from the BAJ website (www.bajunion.org.uk).

BAJ is a very saleable package. Tell people about our excellent benefits.

■ Members have a 24-hour Legal Helpline, £50,000 legal expenses, Employment Legal Advisers, a Copyright Legal Adviser, a Tax Helpline and first-class trade union support.

■ We issue photo UK Press Cards and our subs are lower than the NUJ's. Provincial journalists: BAJ £10 a month, NUJ: £12.02. Freelances, PRs and magazine journalists: BAJ £10 a month, NUJ £15.16. National journalists: BAJ £17.50 a month, NUJ £20.86.

■ BAJ provides free legal representation for freelances in claims for unpaid fees in the small claims court. The NUJ does not do this for freelances.

Please use the enclosed form to sign up a member

Damning indictment of how boss

Sacked for not getting the teas

WOULD you imagine that failing to get the teas at work or sit near the boss would cost you your job?

Any reasonable person would say No, but that's what happened to a member who was made redundant after being given minimal marks for team working in a selection pool. Without that low mark, she would not have been selected.

The selection of our member was so blatantly unfair that the newspaper was forced to pay substantial compensation when BAJ issued tribunal proceedings on her behalf.

Unbelievably her boss claimed that because she would not go and get the teas for the rest of the department she was not a good team player and on this basis gave her a low assessment mark. He also claimed that other members of the department had taken umbrage at this.

When he rearranged the seating plan of the department, he asked her if she would like to move desks so that she wasn't on the periphery. She didn't feel the need to move as this made no

difference to her job performance, and somebody had to sit there.

It's incredible that the boss's opinion of a member of his staff was measured by how close they sat to him or whether or not they got the tea.

Our member never took evening breaks in the pub which allowed colleagues a certain amount of flexibility. They knew the ship was in good hands while they were socialising. Isn't that doing her bit for the team?

Another complaint against our member was that she did not help newcomers or colleagues who were experiencing difficulties. This was absurdly incorrect because she was proud to have trained many new members of the team.

Our member's Head of Department was bound to be biased against her in any selection procedure. He had a personal dislike of her. He seemed to resent her being good at her job.

So much for an objective selection assessment as required by law.

A LOVELY BABY DESPITE IT ALL

OUR member was four weeks away from having her baby when she was made redundant. The Company blithely assured her that the two events were unconnected.

The newspaper's management knew otherwise, but, as is too often the case with most media companies, they hoped to get away with it.

Not this time though! BAJ issued tribunal proceedings for sex discrimination on behalf of our member and, on the steps of the court, she obtained substantial compensation.

Our member's crime in the eyes of her employer was having two babies in quick succession. The law says Mums must not be discriminated against, but this employer was happy to stick two fingers up to that.

Our member informed her boss that she was pregnant again. She let him know that she was planning to take much shorter maternity leave this time as she was worried that, being back at work for just five months before taking leave again, she may be seen in a less than favourable light.

In fact, she was discriminated against after her first baby. Her 1.5% pay rise in the annual pay review was said to be 'very much a token rise as you have only just returned from a year's maternity leave.'

She queried this with HR, but got no satisfaction. Fortunately, her repeated requests for the matter to be resolved led the Company to take legal advice and resulted in her rise being increased to 3%.

From this point she started to feel that she was being isolated and generally left out of work assignments and social occasions. Less and less work was being

offered to her. She was saddened that she was being treated so distantly, but kept a positive disposition while at work.

She was very tired towards the end of her pregnancy, but only asked to leave an hour early once. During the previous pregnancy she had taken rest breaks, but during this second pregnancy she did her utmost to complete her work without any interruptions.

She suffered with sciatic back pain which was exacerbated by being seated. This was noted during her first pregnancy on her pregnant women's risk assessment form, but she didn't mention it during her second pregnancy.

She was keen to be as professional as possible and get on with her work to the best of her ability.

She endured morning sickness for the full term of her pregnancy and was quite ill travelling to work and during the day, but she did not let this interfere with her work.

Then, just before she was due to start maternity leave, she received a phone call from HR saying she was being made redundant.

The timing of this call, so close to her due date, could not have been worse. Her obstetrician, doctor and midwife were telling her to take things easy, this news sent her totally in the other direction.

She suffered sleepless nights and panic attacks worrying about the situation and the implications for her family's future.

Fortunately, and no thanks to her employer, her confinement went well and she now has another lovely baby. She also has substantial compensation to help her build a new life.

Your finances

BAJ's finances remained healthy throughout 2006 despite high legal bills, as the accounts below show. You'll see BAJ had income of £122,349.16 and expenditure of £119,941.17, leaving a surplus for the year of £2,407.99. Our books will now be audited by our chartered accountants Civvals of London W1.

Our management accounts from 1 January until 31 December 2006 are:

INCOME

Advance/arrears subs	4,602.50	March	9,185.25
Donations	1,770.00	April	9,089.00
Bank interest	368.95	May	9,251.50
Legal fees for compromise agreements	3,250.00	June	9,364.00
Dividends	8.46	July	9,354.00
Glyn Jones' Practising Certificate refund	400.00	August	9,479.00
Subs received		September	9,469.00
January	9,065.25	October	9,646.50
February	8,967.75	November	9,556.50
		December	9,521.50
		TOTAL	122,349.16

EXPENDITURE

Legal expenses/Helpline premium	18,225.48	Computer support	132.98
Legal advisers' retainers	22,769.61	Website	275.08
Legal advisers' expenses	76.46	Photocopying	509.11
Legal adviser's practising certificate	575.00	Postage	823.99
Legal adviser's, NEC's and FOC's' insurance	1,365.00	Stationery/printing	1,594.00
Other legal bills/court charges	8,420.32	Secretarial	4,305.75
Books, mainly legal	394.57	Bookkeeping	1,015.00
Tax Helpline	1,175.04	Audit fees	1,968.12
BAJ Press Cards	1,979.67	Bank and BACS charges	463.00
UK Press Cards	607.98	Office rent	4,538.25
Student Press Cards	45.00	Rates	1,547.35
Company search fees	85.73	Water rates	24.76
BAJ NEWS	3,201.19	Office insurance	588.57
Bounty payments	550.00	General Secretary's travel expenses	21.80
MPA/LRD affiliation fees	389.00	Sundry expenses	2,474.16
Pay/NIC (S.Turner)	18,456.71	TOTAL	119,941.17
Pay/NIC (D.Thomas)	17,780.74	TOTAL INCOME	122,349.16
Keyman insurance	389.49	TOTAL EX	119,941.17
Telephones (4)	2,227.91	IN HAND	£2,407.99
Faximilies (2)	636.00	Previous surplus	£15,918.48
Mobile telephones (2)	357.87		

OUTSOURCED OUT OF HER JOB

WHEN it suits them, some employers will lie through their teeth to try to get away with breaking employment laws.

So it was with our member who was rung up at home on her mobile and told that her work on a national newspaper was being outsourced and her job no longer existed.

BAJ advised that the outsourcing should have been subject to prior consultation under TUPE - the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

But executives of the newspaper repeatedly denied that the outsourcing of its online subscription service amounted to a transfer of work or that collective consultation should have been held over it.

When our member's claim for unfair dismissal was submitted to the tribunal, the company's defence - drawn up by a top law firm - again refuted that the company had

done anything wrong.

Our member who lives on her own struggled to make ends meet as she waited for the tribunal case to be heard and could only find poorly paid part-time work outside journalism.

Then, on the eve of the hearing, the company's solicitors had a revelation. They suddenly discovered that the dismissal was in breach of the TUPE law.

They said: "Upon review of the documents and taking witness statements from the Company's witnesses, we have concluded that the outsourcing of work amounts to a relevant transfer for the purposes of TUPE. Consequently, her dismissal was unfair."

Phll the other leg! The Company tried to get away with it and failed - thanks to our member's resolve and BAJ's support

esses abuse journalists of today

Staff job was just a false promise

ANOTHER member worked full-time for a national newspaper. He even had a title, but was paid gross via invoices because the promised staff appointment never materialised.

Then his job disappeared under reorganisation. Our member asked about redundancy pay and, of course, he was told it did not apply to him.

Editorial management was sympathetic to a point. The Managing Editor wrote to our member: "I have managed to extract £7,600 for you. I'm afraid that this is likely to be the best I can do, given how tight things are."

This was a start, but a long way from the substantial staff redundancy terms which our member was entitled to after four years on the paper.

Steve Turner provided our member with extracts from an Inland Revenue booklet entitled, "Are your workers employed or self-employed?" to show to the Managing Editor.

The booklet said: "Common indicators of employment are: The worker does not risk his or her money. The worker is paid by the hour, day, week or month. The company has the right to control what the worker has to do - where, when and how it is to be done - even if such control is rarely practised.

"Common indicators of self-employment are: The worker has a right to hire other people who answer to him or her and are paid by him or her to do the job. The worker is paid an agreed amount for the job regardless of how long it takes. Within an overall deadline, the worker has the right to decide how and

when the work will be done."

Editorial management responded by saying: "Working hours: You are at liberty to take time off and to manage your hours as you see fit." (Wrong! Our member worked 11am until 7pm every day and was always under the control of senior executives).

"You claim you are paid for holidays, but since you invoice for such time off, this is impossible to ascertain. The normal process for booking holidays involves seeking permission from your team leader." (Our member always did this).

"You are not listed on our internal staff directories." (Wrong! Our member's internal email address and phone number were listed in the staff directories).

Despite trying to rubbish our member's case, the Company upped its offer to £10,000 because "We would like to resolve this matter amicably."

Our member's employment was terminated and he left the paper. Under new laws, he had to make a grievance complaint before he could sue the Company for not paying him staff redundancy terms. This he did and a grievance meeting was duly held.

This time, the Company increased its offer to £15,000. Again our member said No. As required by law, he had to lodge an appeal against the first grievance decision before issuing legal proceedings.

This he did. The Company decided at last to do the decent thing. Without a further hearing, it offered a substantial increase and our member accepted.

Still "only" a casual after seven years

OUR member worked part-time for a national newspaper every week for seven years, but he was labelled a casual, not an employee.

So when cost-cutting came along, he was lapped on the shoulder and told he wasn't wanted any more. None of his so-called staff colleagues were affected.

In fact, of course, our member was an employee by dint of being required to go into the office every week, using the paper's equipment and working under the control of the executives.

He was on the payroll, had tax and National Insurance deducted at source, appeared on the work and holiday rotas and had a pass giving him unrestricted access to the premises.

Our member consulted General Secretary Steve Turner and went to see HR to

discuss his rights. He was told he didn't have any because he was a casual.

So legal proceedings were issued for unfair selection for redundancy and failing to pay notice, redundancy and holiday money and wages in line with full-time colleagues.

The case took classic lines. The Company tried to brush aside our member's claims. Then, outside the court, came a substantial offer which our member accepted.

The Company was at great pains to ensure that our member signed a confidentiality agreement so that other so-called casuals on their staff would not know what happened.

That may hoodwink some so-called casuals, but not if they are BAJ members. The union is ready to help them win damages, too, if they are ever kicked out.

HUMILIATED BY HIS DEMOTION

THE Editor repaid loyalty with deception — and it took our member more than two years of stress and financial hardship to get justice for being demoted by him.

The Editor told our member who had been a senior executive for 9 years that despite the appointment of an executive with a superior title "nothing will change."

Our member thought this was pretty fanciful and he was right. The new executive started at the paper and immediately began treating our member as a subordinate. (Our member felt humiliated after serving the paper so well for so long.

He again approached the Editor. He insisted that the Editor discuss the situation as he was designated in his contract as his line manager, but he refused to do so.

That was the last day he worked on the paper. The impossible situation made him very ill and he was signed off with work-related stress by his GP for more than four months.

In a lengthy exchange of correspondence with the Editor, he remained in cloud cuckoo land and insisted that our member's role and position remained the same.

Our member eventually invoked the grievance procedure. He lost the first hearing, but appeared to win the appeal. He was told he would have the same title as the new executive. But jubilation was

short-lived. He was soon told he couldn't go back to the newsroom, but would be in charge of advertising supplements. A dyed-in-the-wool newsroom, he couldn't face a life of organising advertorials. So he resigned.

The job in charge of advertising supplements was said to be vital to the future of the newspaper, but it wasn't occupied before or since. Our member suspected that it was an executive's job designed to be rejected by him.

BAJ issued proceedings on behalf of our member for constructive unfair dismissal. The hearing was eventually fixed for two days in November 2005. The day before the hearing, the newspaper's solicitor went sick.

The hearing was postponed until April 2006. The case proceeded so slowly when it was heard that only two witnesses had completed their evidence after two days with another witness still in the box.

The hearing was adjourned until October. The parties assembled at the tribunal and discussions to settle the case were conducted on the steps of the court.

This time, the Company, which had previously offered derisory compensation, made a very substantial offer which our member accepted.

He was able to hold his head high as he and his family and friends celebrated his victory in a nearby pub with champagne.

COMPLAINTS WERE FABRICATED

IT'S a great shock being made redundant, but shock usually turns to anger when the reasons for selection are disclosed.

Selection procedures are supposed to be objective in accordance with job descriptions and job evaluations, but these rarely exist in journalism.

So executives are left to be as irrational as they like. Some try to be fair in an unpleasant situation, but a lot relish the chance to give vent to their prejudices.

The victim is invariably chosen first, then the scores of everyone in the selection pool are fixed to get the desired result.

Our member obtained substantial compensation with BAJ's help, but he is still, many months after his selection, angry about his marks on the various selection criteria.

The scores were divorced from reality. They were blatantly unfair about his ability and commitment. Some complaints against him were fabricated.

On systems knowledge, for instance, our member was marked low allegedly because "his knowledge did not extend beyond what he needed to know to carry out his job."

In fact, it was partly because of his wide technical knowledge that our member was originally hired to help develop the company's website after being sought out by a senior executive. And at home, he has a Mac set-up that he uses for freelance work demanding skills way beyond those he needed to apply in the office.

The bigoted executive wrote about our member: "It is clear he scored significantly below all the other members of the team. I realise this may raise the question: 'Why was this poor work not addressed before?'"

"The simple answer is that I had ongoing informal conversations with him about those elements of his performance which I considered needed improvement."

This was absolutely untrue. The executive never once had a conversation with our member, either formally or informally, about his work performance.

Soon after our member was told he was being made redundant, he wrote to IIR to ask - why me. The written reply: "Your name was pulled out of the hat."

Not much you can say after that.

Freelance forum

By Jane Furnival

STRIKE me pink! The Sun paid a member before she set finger to keyboard. "Sadly, it's one giant p*** take elsewhere," she comments, with payments taking six months or longer, especially now the Daily Express and Daily Mirror insist on paying on publication or not at all.

"The rates at Daily Mail Sport are disgraceful – the lowest," laments another contributor.

The BAJ suggests you don't accept kill fees. The Daily Mail offered someone a 50% kill fee upfront – in other words, "We'll pay double if we publish."

It might be worth saying, "I understand you're not sure, so I'll sit on that offer and offer it to the Mirror or the Telegraph" – their sworn enemies. (I always add £50 to my bill per swear word, if sworn at, by the way).

Another paper offered a member a £500 kill fee for a news feature, with the odd proviso that it wasn't offered elsewhere. Perhaps it was about the publisher's marital problems.

Re-sell

If you re-sell work, either through a syndication agency, or offering second rights elsewhere, or just rewriting it, remember that IPC habitually asks freelancers to sign away all rights.

One editor confided to me that they are taught to say, "So that's all rights, OK?" quickly, then put the phone down, so be prepared. If you've got something hot, you can insist on "first rights only".

"Never sign away copyright," advises one member. "All offers of syndication have produced nothing, whereas I regularly sell on my own stories."

She secured £750 from a magazine for a story first written for a newspaper, which prompted the paper's syndication boys to crawl out from under their stones and claim that they could have got £1,250 for her. Really, after their 50% cut plus VAT? (You can reclaim any agent's VAT as a tax expense, by the way).

FEEWATCH

Daily Express feature, 1,800 words, £750-£800. *Daily Express Day and Night* showbiz gossip, £50 per item or £200 for a lead. *Daily Mail* diary feature, 200 words, £90. *FT Magazine*, First Person page, £300. Daily tabloid, feature, 1,500 words, £1,000. *Sunday Mirror* property feature, 1,200 words, £500. *Hello!* celebrity feature, 1,200 words, £1,000. *Hello!* celebrity feature from a different writer, 1,500 words, £1,000 (that shows there is scope for negotiation).

Evening Standard travel/property feature, 900 words, £500. *Bella*, 1,000-word real life feature, £750. *Daily Mirror*, real life feature, 1,500 words, £850. *My Weekly* celebrity feature, 1,500 words, £250. *Weekly News*, celebrity feature, 1,200 words, £200 (shame). *Chat*, 350-word health piece, £100. Woman's weekly magazine feature, 800 words, £350; 1,000 words in similar publication, £450.

BBC-1 news feature interview, £50 paid 6 months late. *BBC Radio 2*, review of three films, 1 hour, £175. *BBC Berkshire*, round-up of new film releases, 15 minutes, £50. *BBC* local radio, news feature on the car industry, 3 minutes, £66.60.

Any fees, comments or stories, email me: janechapel2@yahoo.co.uk.

Farewell to Terry, true gentleman of Fleet Street



Terry: Always Cheerful

Thank-you letter to BAJ chums

BAJ NEWS asked members to send Terry cards wishing him well in the months before his death. Scores of colleagues and old chums did so.

He cherished them and kept them in a box by his bed, but they were too numerous for Terry to respond to individually. So he penned a thank-you letter to BAJ NEWS.

● The BAJ's influence is global! I had cards from the States and Oz as well as several from colleagues who were sensible enough to move to the Med!

The massive growth in inflation is shown in the messages. A couple from the old Evening News and Daily Express days in the Sixties said I owed them 'The Office Quid.' By the Daily Mirror and the Eighties, it had become 'The Office Fiver.' Latterly, at the Sunday Mirror, there were scandalous claims about me owing 'The Office Tenner.' Absolutely outrageous. Everyone was repaid!

The cards and letters were a joy to receive and it would have been delightful to have met up with everyone to thank them personally. For the moment, I'd just like to say a Big Thank You. ●

Steve Turner said: "I miss Terry. He was such a lovely, kind and caring man!"

Key Facts

- **RPI INFLATION:** January 1987 - 100. January 2007 - 201.6. Rise in past year 4.2 per cent.
- **AVERAGE EARNINGS:** 2000 - 100. December 2006 - 127.8. Private sector rise in the past year, including bonuses, 4.1 per cent.
- **UNEMPLOYMENT:** At 31 December 2006 averages 1,690,000. Up 133,000 on the year.
- **HOUSES:** Halifax national house price index: 1983 - 100. January 2007 - 610.5. Annual change 9.9 per cent.
- **MOTORING:** AA's new system for mileage rates for cars averaging 10,000 miles a year: Car cost new up to £10,000 - 34.28p a mile. Car cost new £10,000 - £13,000 - 43.12p a mile. Car cost new £13,000 - £20,000 - 55.04p a mile.

TERRY O'Hanlon, veteran Sunday Mirror news reporter, has died, aged 64, after a long and courageous fight against a series of health problems which culminated in him succumbing to leukaemia, writes Tony Bushby.

A stalwart supporter of the BAJ since its founding, Terry served as Deputy FOC of the Sunday Mirror, and played a very active and influential role in protecting the interests of all his colleagues.

Never known to raise his voice, his gentle tones were the key to his reporting triumphs. His softly, softly approach invariably worked, landing him the exclusive interviews that others just couldn't get.

He started in journalism at 16 as a reporter on the Croydon Times in South London. Then he decided to see the world. He became a purser on cruise liners and then an officer on cargo boats.

But newspapers were always his first love and he began homeward news desks with job applications. These would arrive bearing the stamps of the foreign ports his ship called at. One such letter attracted the attention of a stamp collector on the London Evening News news desk. It led to a job when Terry next came ashore.

In 1973, he joined the Daily Express as a crime reporter. After several successful years, he joined the Daily Mirror. A few years later, Terry quit to run a store and cafe in Devon and a snooker magazine.

Then he got together with Ted Hynds at the Devon News Agency in Exeter. In 1988, he rejoined the Daily Mirror in London and later moved to the Sunday Mirror as a reporter.

Robert Maxwell took a shine to Terry and when he attended a so-called celebrity bash in Tangiers, he ordered that Terry should cover the event for all three MGN titles. It was to be a fateful mission for Terry.

He returned home and collapsed with

Memorial Service

A memorial service for Terry will be held in St Bride's church, Fleet Street, at 11.30am on March 20.

renal failure due to dehydration caused by stress and food poisoning. He just survived, but for the rest of his life he was kept alive by a cocktail of drugs.

Despite his ill-health, nobody ever heard him complain. He carried on pulling in story after story.

Discharged from hospital last year, he was told there was no cure for his cancer. Undaunted, he was as cheerful as ever, wanting to know who was doing what and the background to stories of the day.

It was during one of our many phone chats that he suggested the time seemed right for a get-together of the old chums – if they would come.

Come they did, from near and far, to a pub in Croydon, truly representing his entire journalistic career.

Terry had decided to organise this, his own "wake" in advance, for a chance to reminisce over a drink with his chums.

Ignoring all protestations and declaring quite emphatically, "I insist... it's my round," he picked up the tab.

I salute Terry O'Hanlon, reporter, one of Fleet Street's Finest – my staunch friend and colleague for over 35 years.

Terry who was divorced, leaves a daughter Sara and a son Gavin.

SAVE RIGHT TO KNOW

JUST two years after the Freedom of Information Act came into force, it is in danger of being crippled by the obsession with secrecy in some quarters of Westminster and Whitehall.

The Department of Constitutional Affairs says it is "necessary" to cut £12m from the £35m annual cost of processing requests for information. Necessary at a time when total government revenue exceeds £520 BILLION?

The real reasons for the proposed cuts can be inferred from the fact that a Commons committee is considering a Private Member's Bill seeking to exempt Parliament from the Act.

The BAJ National Executive Committee has pledged its full support to the media's campaign to protect the public's right to know.