



Integrity & Justice

Holding the powerful to account



My name is Michael Ward. I am 67 years old. I am British. I live in Herefordshire.

Twenty years ago, I was sent to jail for something I did not do. I served two terms of imprisonment and my career was destroyed.

A very unusual set of circumstances caused this injustice.

Let me tell you how it came about.

In the late 1980's, after a number of years in the City, I decided to set up a business of my own. I saw an opportunity in the entertainments industry. I founded a company called European Leisure PLC to acquire and build nightclubs and theme

bars. Within three years, the Company was worth £100 million and was growing rapidly.

In the course of building up European Leisure, I met a man called Michael Quadrini. He had sold us his business in Newcastle. I did not know it at the time, but Quadrini was a crook, with a history of fraud and blackmail.

Shortly after selling his business, Quadrini tried to blackmail me. He came to my office one day and demanded that I pay him a large sum of money. He told me if I did not pay him this money he would wreck my career. He told me he had secretly tape-recorded our conversations over a long period of time and had edited the tapes to alter their meaning. From an original twenty hours of conversation he had created six short bursts of noise of one minute or more, each with no start and no finish, and totalling 12 minutes. He told me he had removed all material helpful to me. He said "I've got them to make you seem a criminal... You'll be surprised what I've got them to say".

I had said nothing improper in any conversation. I refused to pay Quadrini a penny. I told him I would appoint independent lawyers to investigate his claims. Quadrini said he would not cooperate with any such inquiry but would now work to destroy me.



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Over the next eighteen months, Quadrini played his 12 minute heavily-doctored tape to whoever would listen. He eventually won the support of the Mail on Sunday, which published a number of defamatory stories about me. I sued for libel. The Serious Fraud Office, alerted by the publicity, responded by launching an investigation into me and my Company.

Although shocked at the turn of events, I regarded the Serious Fraud Office inquiry as an opportunity finally to nail Quadrini's false allegations. Within hours of the commencement of the inquiry, I was responding to questions and cooperating fully.

It is at this stage that a nasty story gets a whole lot worse.

The Mail on Sunday made a decision to break the law. The Serious Fraud Office agreed to let it do so.

Dealing, first, with the Mail on Sunday, the newspaper realised it had based its articles upon a liar and that it would lose the libel case. It calculated that the best way to avoid an expensive libel trial was to arrange for me to be convicted of criminal offences. Over three years, two of the Mail on Sunday's then top journalists perverted the course of justice against me. They were the City Editor, Clive Wolman, and Finance Editor, Lawrence Lever.

What did these journalists do to get me convicted of offences I did not commit?

Firstly, they broke into my home when I was abroad, forced open my filing cabinet, and took away all of the vital business records and personal documents I had carefully put aside for the libel trial.

When, a year later, they discovered that I was trying to replace some of these records, they secretly paid a builder working in my house to steal every new document I was putting aside.

I must be the only person in history who commenced a Serious Fraud Office investigation armed with thousands of documents with which to defend myself and prove my innocence, only to be forced to attend trial without a single one of them.

Wolman and Lever created false evidence. They did this in two ways. Firstly, they invented allegations against me out of thin air, signing false witness statements and



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publishing knowingly false stories about me in their newspaper. Secondly, they made secret payments in cash to witnesses who they instructed to invent stories about me and lie under oath at my trial.

They went further. They threatened and harassed my friends and associates. They leaked unauthorized confidential information. They bugged my telephone.

They were deliberately cruel, on one occasion telephoning me to say their friends in the Serious Fraud Office had told them I was not going to be charged, only to call back a short time later with the words “That was a wind up... You are going to be charged!”

Their campaign made me ill. I complained on numerous occasions to the Serious Fraud Office that their inquiry was being secretly corrupted by the Mail on Sunday. I begged the Serious Fraud Office to put a stop to this law-breaking by the newspaper, investigate it and deal with the prejudice.

The Serious Fraud Office refused. It defended the newspaper. At the end of its inquiry, the Serious Fraud Office publicly thanked the Mail on Sunday for the support it had given over the previous three years.

The Serious Fraud Office manipulated its own inquiry to add to the prejudice and unfairness. It skewed its inquiries to avoid unearthing evidence helpful to me. When it found documents which proved my innocence, the Serious Fraud Office hid these documents and denied they existed. They withheld the prior criminal records of key witnesses and misrepresented the true character of every one of them.

How can a person receive a fair trial if his documents are stolen, witnesses are bribed to lie under oath, he and his associates are threatened and harassed, and when the prosecution knowingly tells lies in open court?

And how can it be right for Serious Fraud Office officials carrying out an inquiry to encourage and defend such widespread law-breaking?

You may wonder why the Serious Fraud Office would collude with the law-breaking Mail on Sunday and work to get me convicted of offences I had not committed. Let me explain why.

At the very time these events were taking place, the Serious Fraud Office had major



problems of its own. It was fighting for survival. It had failed to get convictions in numerous other cases. It had become a laughing stock. People were referring to it as the Serious Farce Office. It was at great risk of being closed down. Inside the organisation, its Director George Staple (accused of lying to Parliament) and other members of the senior team (including Deputy Director John Knox, Assistant Director Robert Wardle and Case Controller Gordon Dickinson) were boiling with rage at the public sneers they were receiving.

They decided to get a conviction in my case at all and any cost. They let the Mail on Sunday do its dirty work for them – but without the burden of proper procedure.

They knew that with every stolen document, and every witness paid to lie under oath at my trial, the chance of getting me convicted increased. They then bent their own inquiries to suit their crooked agenda.

A senior official who enjoyed access to the Serious Fraud Office's papers in my case would later describe to me how the Serious Fraud Office's approach had been akin to a vendetta.

Since being released from prison in 1998, I have been fighting to get these matters investigated. Every government agency I have approached has refused to do so. I have been treated with deceit and derision. The Establishment does not want the truth to get out. The Tories do not want to embarrass the Mail on Sunday, a strongly pro-Tory newspaper.

Everyone is protecting each other, lying, cheating or simply ignoring. The top judges I have approached have been no better. They have been ignorant and unjust. Extraordinarily, they have shown themselves unable to comprehend the law (a matter admitted by the deceitful and lying Criminal Cases Review Commission who told me my appeals would fail if judges were likely to be embarrassed as a consequence).

How does Robert Buckland fit into all of this?

Robert Buckland knows what happened to me. Not long before he became Solicitor General, he wrote to me a letter sympathising with my predicament. He agreed that I had a 'real grievance' against the Serious Fraud Office and the Mail on Sunday.

When Robert Buckland was promoted to Solicitor General and became directly



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responsible for the Serious Fraud Office, I felt certain that he would use his powers to order an investigation into what he had already agreed was my 'real grievance' against the Serious Fraud Office and the Mail on Sunday.

However, he did not. He washed his hands of me. Like every other public servant before him over twenty years, Robert Buckland fell upon a mix of obfuscation, lies, and outright distortion to keep secret the Serious Fraud Office's and the Mail on Sunday's gross misconduct in my case. He forced me and my family to continue to suffer, regarding us as expendable in the wider Establishment cover up of what happened to me.

Robert Buckland is not a man to be trusted with responsibility over our lives. He does not deserve to be Solicitor General. He does not deserve to be an MP.

I am taking my fight to Robert Buckland. I am not a criminal who wants his crime concealed. I want everything to be out in the open. I am innocent, not guilty. I want an investigation into the gross misconduct which took place in my case and which put me behind bars for offences I did not commit.

Michael Ward
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