

Nearly two dozen executives and reporters from The Sun – who had been arrested by detectives over allegations of illegal news-gathering practices – settled into their seats.

They met earlier in the day to prepare for their meeting with their ultimate boss, one of the world's biggest media barons.

They were livid that the company had supplied a mass of internal communications to police that had betrayed confidential sources, some of whom were public officials who received no payment for information.

The company established the management and standards committee (MSC) – assisted by Linklaters, the law firm – to collate the material to hand over to the police in the wake of the phone-hacking affair that closed The Sun's sister title, the News of the World.

Murdoch tells his staff that setting up the MSC was a "mistake".

The News of the World was caught routinely using a private investigator to hack the voicemail messages of the mobile telephones of people in the news. The newspaper's closure two years ago led to Lord Justice Leveson's inquiry into newspaper practices, which reported in November.

Meanwhile, police are running 'Operation Weeting' to investigate phone hacking, and 'Operation Elveden' to look into payments by journalists to public officials for information for stories.

The Sun journalists felt betrayed. And as they had become ensnared in a massive police investigation, they saw themselves as "scapegoats".

As they walked into the board room, some had already set digital recorders tucked away to capture the boss's comments.

The meeting begins tensely. Darcey makes some opening comments.

Graham Dudman, The Sun's former managing editor, outlines some of his colleagues' key concerns.

Murdoch comes over as angry at the authorities, railing against police and judges. He claims that his newspaper group has been "picked on", complaining bitterly about enemies such as Lord Puttnam, former film producer and a Labour peer, and Gordon Brown, former prime minister and chancellor in Tony Blair's governments.

At times, Murdoch seems to stop himself in his tracks as he begins to show his staff how he even feels sorry for himself.

As the meeting progresses, the anger and bitterness among his journalists is stark.

They were accompanied by Deidre Sanders, The Sun's agony aunt, to whom many of the newspaper's journalists have turned for emotional support during a tumultuous period.

By the time she speaks, towards the end of the 45-minute meeting, the mood in the meeting room turns from anger to sorrow.

One executive is heard sobbing after Sanders reads out a letter written by his wife to Murdoch.

A spokeswoman for News UK said in a statement to Exaro: "The Sun has been, and continues to be, supportive of its employees. Mr Murdoch has great empathy for those whose lives have been overturned, and continues to believe everyone charged deserves the right to be presumed innocent unless proven otherwise."

Exaro has compiled a full transcript of the meeting, redacting a few details and passages for legal reasons where marked...

Mike Darcey: "So, we met... we talked about one or two things there. We had a bit of an update in both directions in terms of state of play. I don't think we need to go through all that again. But, in a way, one of the key questions you left me with is you would really welcome the opportunity to chat to Rupert, just to hear his views and express your views to him, if that was possible, if he's in town. He's in town, so he's come along today, and was happy to come and meet you. I thought it would be a good chance for him to hear how you're getting along, the state of play at the moment, and give you the opportunity to ask him questions you've got, any concerns that you have been raising with us that you'd like to hear as well."

Rupert Murdoch: "Yeah, look, please be just as honest as you want to be, and I'll try and respond."

Graham Dudman (The Sun's former managing editor): "Okay, can I- If I could start by introducing myself. I'm Graham Dudman, I was the managing editor for seven years, until a couple of years ago. We spoke many times on the phone when I was editing, and I just wanted to thank you today for your time, appreciate that. We met earlier on this afternoon, all of us, and I was given the job of just sort of introducing- kicking it off. So, you will know that the people in this room are the human cost of the decision that was taken - we believe in haste - to set up the MSC and give it, what we believe, was the sole aim of protecting News Corp at all costs. We believe that we are the human cost of that decision.

"Until their arrests, everybody that you're looking at in this room today was a loyal, hard-working employee devoted to you personally, to The Sun, to News International and everything that this company and you stand for, and have been proud to work here - proud to work here.

"People are at different stages of their career. You can see by just looking around this room. Some are at the beginning, some are half-way through-ish, some are approaching the final stages of their career. People are beginning to plan their lives around News International. Other people have given their lives to News International. Some faces you will recognise, some you won't. One thing that everybody in this room shares - everybody in this room shares - whether we are 20-something, 30-something, 40-something, 50-something or 60-something, is that we were arrested, thrown into police cells, treated as common criminals in front of our children, our families, and our neighbours, and our friends and our colleagues, for doing nothing more than the company expected of us - nothing.

"So, as I say, we met earlier today. We have some questions that we would like to ask, we are very happy for

you- to hear what you'd like to say. We've got the questions simply to give the meeting a kind of structure, some of the issues that we would like to address in the limited time that we've got, and I'm happy to kick off. Several of us-"

RM: "Can I just say first that I appreciate very much what you're saying. I'd be saying the same thing if I was in your chair. And I'm sure we've made mistakes. But it's hard for you to see it this way. I'm just as annoyed as you are at the police, and you're directing it at me instead, but never mind. I mean, it is absolutely – and we will be returning to this as a paper, if we can get through a bit more of this (Murdoch slaps table) – what they're doing, what they did to you, and how they treated people at the BBC, saying 'a couple of you come in for a cup of tea at four in the afternoon,' you guys got thrown out of bed by gangs of cops at six in the morning, and I'm just as annoyed as you are. But all I'd ask that you remember is that in that first month, you said was panic, maybe there was panic that we closed the News of the World, but we were working in the belief – I think rightly – the police were about to invade this building, and take all the computers out the way, and just put us out of business totally. And everyone could have lost out.

"And it was done to protect the business. We thought, protecting everybody, but that's how it started. And if you want to accuse me of a certain amount of panic, there's some truth in that. But it was very, very- I don't know- it's hard for you to remember it, it was such- but it was- I was under personal siege – not that that mattered – but it was- the whole place was- all the Press were screaming and yelling, and we might have gone too far in protecting ourselves. And you were the victims of it. It's not enough for me to say you've got my sympathy. But you do have my total support. But go ahead, please."

GD: "On that line of support, which is useful. [Redacted.] In the event that any of us go to court, and in the event that we are convicted of whatever offences we're convicted of, what assurances can you give us about our individual future at News International, and any continued medical support that is being given, and the current support that we are receiving now?"

(Pause.)

RM: "Well, of course, I expected that question. And, naturally, anyone who's released or anyone who's acquitted will just continue. I've been told that I must not give guarantees, but I can give you something."

Unidentified Sun journalist: "Medical support?"

RM: "I guarantee you that will continue. And I will do everything in my power to give you total support, even if you're convicted and get six months or whatever. I think it's just outrageous, but- and I don't know of anybody, or anything, that did anything that wasn't being done across Fleet Street and wasn't the culture. And we're being picked on. I think that it was the old right-wing establishment, [Lord] Puttnam, or worse, the left-wing get-even crowd of Gordon Brown. There was a sort of- we got caught with dirty hands, I guess, with the News of the World, and everybody piled in. It was a get-even time for things that were done with The Sun over the last 40 years, 38 years, whatever it is. But that's no help to you guys in your personal situation. All I have to say is, you thanked me for giving you an hour today, I spend more than an hour every day thinking about this, and will just do anything I can to help and support you. Doesn't make good what's happened to you, or what is happening to you, or the torture that you and your families have been put through. Still, I mean, it's a disgrace. Here we are, two years later, and the cops are totally incompetent. So, I'll just ask you a question, I don't want to interrupt you, are you happy with the lawyers that have been

provided?”

GD: “Personally, yes.”

RM: “Anyone who is unhappy, say so, and we’ll do what we can to give you the choice of another lawyer. We were assured we’ve done a pretty good job of choosing, but I don’t know.”

Geoff Webster (The Sun’s deputy editor): “I think most people are comfortable with the legal representation, and one or two people have traded in the initial lawyers for people they feel more comfortable with. So I think on that score, we’re pretty confident we’ve got good people behind us. [Redacted.]”

RM: “I think the worst thing that’s going to happen is that some of you will be charged shortly, and some of you will be released shortly. And the bulk of you will be made aware after three or four months. It’s just disgraceful what they’re doing, but we’ll see.”

GD: “Can I follow up the first question? ... Will News International – we asked this question last time of Mike – will News International be allowed to make a decision – will the decision rest with News International – on whether somebody is retained in employment with the company? Or will that be taken by people in New York?”

MD: “Sorry, when you asked that last time,, we don’t know what you meant by, ‘people in New York’. Were you specifically referring to the MSC?”

GD: “The MSC, or a News Corp lawyer who says, ‘No, Rupert. You can’t do that. You’ve got to do this.’”

RM: (Chuckles.) “Well, we all take legal advice. I’ll take that decision. I’ll take responsibility. Absolutely. And I don’t think there’s any problem about that. But-”

GD: “Sorry, basically, on that note, sorry for interrupting you. So you, as chairman, you would be prepared to go against the advice of – legal advice – if you felt that was appropriate?”

RM: “Sure.”

Unidentified Sun journalist: “You referred to, you used the phrase, things were done on The Sun for over 40 years. I personally have been here for less than ten. But I’m pretty confident that the working practices that I’ve seen here were ones that I’ve inherited, rather than instigated. Would you recognise that all this pre-dates many of our involvement here?”

RM: “We’re talking about payments for news tips from cops: that’s been going on a hundred years, absolutely. You didn’t instigate it.”

Unidentified Sun journalist: “No.”

RM: *“I don’t know, you know in your own heart, I’m not going to ask you now, but I would have thought 100 per cent – but at least 90 per cent – of payments were made at the instigation of cops, saying, ‘I’ve got a good story here. It’s worth 500 quid,’ or something. And you would say, ‘No, it’s not,’ or ‘We’ll check it*

out,' or whatever. And they'd say, 'Well, we'll ring the Mirror...' (Whispers) It was the culture of Fleet Street.

"I remember when I first bought the News of the World, the first day I went to the office... and there was a big wall-safe... And I said, 'What's that for?'"

"And they said, 'We keep some cash in there.'"

"And I said, 'What for?'"

"They said, 'Well, sometimes the editor needs some on a Saturday night for powerful friends. And sometimes the chairman [the late Sir William Carr] is doing badly at the tables, (laughter) and he helps himself...'"

"Now there was a law passed against this in 1906. That's when it was first recognised as a problem. The previous chief of public prosecution, who we hired for a few days then he realised it was too embarrassing, he had to give it up, [Lord] Macdonald. He said he knew that on Fleet Street there were payments made, and he decided not to go after it because it was all too petty – and too complicated. The idea that the cops then started coming after you, kick you out of bed, and your families, at six in the morning, is unbelievable."

Sun staffer: "I'm [redacted]. I'm the [redacted], and have been for the last decade. [Redacted.] This is the only paper I've ever worked for, the only national newspaper. Would it surprise you to know that the first time I heard of the 1906 Misconduct in Public Office Act was when I was arrested? No one had ever told me about that. I'd never seen-"

RM: "About what?"

Sun staffer: "The first time I heard about the 1906 Misconduct Act was when I was arrested. No one had ever told me about this in this company-"

RM: "The first time I heard about it was a couple of weeks ago, but go on."

Sun staffer: "So, completely oblivious to the fact that the long-term practice of this company to pay public officials was illegal, my job description meant that as a result of that, it came directly through my particular department [redacted]. You can understand how we all feel that we are effectively being made scapegoats."

RM: "Yeah. And one of these high-priced lawyers would say it's our fault, but that situation existed at every newspaper in Fleet Street. Long since forgotten. But absolutely. Do you think you will be charged, in your case?"

Sun staffer: "[Redacted.] My lawyer- he says no one can tell in this particular situation, but we are caught in the middle of a perfect storm in many ways. You've got a police force desperate to make up for previous mistakes. The MSC continue to hand over information on each and every person in this room-"

RM: "No, they're not. No, they're not. Haven't given them anything for months."

Sun staffer: "In which case the police are using the databases that they have been given."

RM: "I know. Kathleen Harris, the lawyer, has told them to stop doing it, because they're lying."

Sun staffer: "Well, they have, they're putting vast amounts of evidence in front of me, dating back an entire decade, since I took the job as [redacted]. Expenses forms, notebooks- And, as I say, the first time I was aware that [redacted] was on the day they arrived at my house completely out of the blue and arrested me – 14 of them – who went as far as to use cameras to search under the floorboards of my flat to see whether I had been stashing illegal information."

RM: "I mean, if it wasn't so sad and so terrible, it would be laughable. But if your lawyer puts that- You won't get any help from judges – but, I think, juries. I've got – not absolute faith – but a lot of hope in juries. I think you'll all make fine witnesses. And you want a lot of help from your lawyers, and practice. Because your juries are your best hope."

GD: "Can I ask about something that Sue Akers said. Akers was the original commander of Elveden. She said at Leveson that when the cops came to News International, they were investigating hacking at News of the World. And at the time, they had no intention of coming into The Sun. Weren't interested. That was until the MSC handed over mountains and mountains of evidence connected to people in this room. Why did they do that?"

RM: (Long pause.) "Because- it was a mistake, I think. But, in that atmosphere, at that time, we said, 'Look, we are an open book, we will show you everything.' And the lawyers just got rich going through millions of e-mails, stuff I wouldn't even have thought was suspicious, but they thought, 'Hand it over.' A lot of which I'm sure the police didn't take any notice of. We just went through the whole company. We went through the New York Post, went through the papers in Australia – everything. Everything they wanted to see."

Unidentified Sun journalist: "Can I ask you a question, Mr Murdoch?"

RM: "Yes."

Unidentified Sun journalist: "Quite a number of us in this room were selected for an interview with Linklaters, the lawyers, long before any suggestion there would be arrests or there had been any wrongdoing. The interviews were conducted on the basis that Linklaters just wanted to get a feel for how the newspaper was put together, who did what, how it worked, all the rest of it. And then, perhaps not surprisingly now, nearly every single person interviewed by Linklaters found themselves arrested. And, indeed, large chunks of the interviews we gave to Linklaters was produced to us in the police station on our arrest. Which naturally leads us to believe that we had been selected, perhaps for no other reason than most of the people arrested at that point had the title 'editor' behind their role. And, I have to say, we're deeply suspicious of Linklaters' role in all this that names were cherry-picked, if you like. We went through the process with Linklaters, and then soon after we were arrested. That doesn't sit comfortably with us really. That doesn't suggest to me that evidence was gone through meticulously by the MSC, and then handed to police with the best intentions, perhaps. I think it was the other way around. I think our names were picked out."

RM: "Excuse me. When you went to Linklaters, weren't you advised to have a lawyer with you?"

GW: "We could if we wanted."

RM: "But you thought it wasn't necessary."

GW: "Maybe we were too trusting."

RM: "Exactly. If they want to see anyone again, don't see them without a lawyer. Anyone. I mean it. Don't speak to anyone."

GW: "Well, none of us move without a lawyer with us at the moment, so that might be an issue. But you can see where I'm coming from. A lot of us do feel that rather than the evidence being found and then fitted to the names, perhaps the other way around. It's very difficult to shake that idea off, to be honest. So, we are where we are, and that's that. We'll see how the process goes. But I just wanted to make you aware of that. You may be aware of that or not."

RM: "I was told about that this morning, but I wasn't aware that happened. And I don't know who was behind this, your victimisation. I understand exactly where you're coming from. **But why are the police behaving in this way? It's the biggest inquiry ever, over next to nothing.**"

GW: "Well, it's preposterous."

RM: "And now they're arresting their own, who never even took money."

GW: "Well, quite. Quite. They're out of control."

RM: "They're going to put all newspapers out of business. Someone tweeted from The Times today, there was a tweet saying he'd just had lunch with one of his contacts, and he was on the way down to the police station to drop the guy in it. It was a joke. It's unbelievable. Actually, it's good for all of us, in that it's going to get the whole of Fleet Street thinking it's preposterous."

GW: "Well, I hope so. There's a piece being done tomorrow: Keir Starmer – I haven't seen the statement – but he's making a statement today."

RM: "Who?"

GW: "Keir Starmer, the head of the CPS [Crown Prosecution Service], making a statement today which relates to the Savile inquiry and historic sexual offences and all the rest of it, also includes children. The Met Police have got 13 coppers dedicated to chasing paedophiles, and they've got nigh-on 200 looking at us. And the support staff that goes with that 200 will be at least another 100."

RM: "Yeah, I've heard bigger figures... They've had waves of people come in. The second wave has knocked over the first wave. It goes on, and on, and on. **It doesn't help you to know that the police are incompetent.**"

GW: "It would be nice to hit back when we can."

RM: “We will, we will.”

GW: “And hit back by pointing out the cost, the manpower, perhaps put an FOI in for the overtime on Elveden in particular. You can bet these officers aren’t turning up at six in the morning for nothing. And we should publish all this. We should be giving it to them. We’ve got nowt to lose.”

RM: “The people who came in and turned over Rebekah [Brooks, former chief executive of News International and ex-editor of the News of the World] on a Monday morning, and her mother-in-law – there [were] about 15 or 16 – most of them, a dozen or so, came from Manchester, a murder squad or something. And there were three local cops. It’s ridiculous, quite openly. But that’s no- it doesn’t get you off the hook.”

GD: “Can I return to the issue of the support which you’ve shown and expressed today, for which I think everyone will be very grateful-”

RM: “Yeah, but emotional support is not enough. I’ve got to do more. I mean, at least, everybody will be paid. You’re all innocent until proven guilty. What you’re asking is, what happens if some of you are proven guilty? What afterwards? I’m not allowed to promise you- I will promise you continued health support- but your jobs – I’ve got to be careful what comes out – but frankly, I won’t say it, but just trust me. Okay?”

GD: “And again, there’s a point related to that, and I just wanted to bring it up, cos this was discussed earlier. We’re very grateful for that: don’t get us wrong. But what happens if you’re not here?”

RM: “That’s a good question. I might not be here tomorrow-”

(Laughter.)

GD: “Will the company’s support vanish overnight if you’re not here?”

RM: “Yes- If I wasn’t here, the decision would be- Well, it will either be with my son, Lachlan, or with Robert Thomson [News Corporation chief executive]. And you don’t have any worries about either of them.”

GD: “Not a lawyer? It wouldn’t be a lawyer’s decision?”

RM: “No.”

GD: “Lachlan or Robert, then?”

RM: “People are going to express opinions, but it’s the leadership of the company who would take the decision.”

Rhodri Phillips (Sun reporter): “Mr Murdoch, you said earlier that you think most of us would be okay – would be in the clear. Is that just a gut feeling, a hunch, or is it information that you know that we don’t?”

RM: **“It’s nothing much more than a hunch. Whether it’s 30 per cent, or 50 per cent, that they don’t go ahead with, release, they will take their bloody time about it just in case, and keep torturing you.** But the very fact that there are any, will be almost an admission that they went too far. Okay, the whole thing is going too far, but it’s going to weaken them. **But what I worry about for your sakes is that those who are charged may not get to court until next year. They’re unbelievably slow... It’s just getting dragged out and dragged out, through incompetence...**

“But I think, fairly soon, we’ve been told to expect some charges and some releases, but not by any means covering all of you. It’s the best indication we have, but I don’t really trust anything they tell us...”

Sun staffer: “The big issue for most of us going to trial is, let’s be honest, most of us won’t get a fair one, even if the judge decides we will or claims that we are. *Because it’s News International, it’s The Sun, it’s Rebekah, it’s you, with respect Mr Murdoch, it’s what the papers have been all about. It’s trying to go for News International, and we’re the people that will be sat in the dock facing it.*”

RM: “I don’t think that’s totally fair. I think that we’ve been a paper that’s never been frightened to get-wade into big controversies, and as such we’ve made some enemies, many times, but we’ve made a lot of friends too. And I don’t think it’s all one way. But they wouldn’t be buying- two million people wouldn’t be buying The Sun every day. But, yeah, I know what you’re saying. Well, where would I, or The Sun, be most unpopular? It would be with the judges.”

Sun staffer: “Absolutely, absolutely. Completely agree...”

Unidentified Sun journalist: “I’m not too worried about the legal situation. But the worst thing has been... last year a friend and good contact of mine was arrested. He sent me some stuff, totally in the public interest, no money paid for. He was arrested under data protection for unauthorised disclosure of information... He feels very aggrieved towards the company that he gave me this material in good faith, and through no fault of my own, the golden trust, if you like, of journalistic confidentiality has been breached...”

RM: “Did he give you stuff that he shouldn’t have done?”

Unidentified Sun journalist: “We haven’t published some of it yet. But it was in the public interest...”

RM: “The thing about public interest- the judges and lawyers will tell you it’s not a legal defence. But I think it’s a massive defence with the jury...”

Unidentified Sun journalist: “The genie here has been let out of the bottle by the MSC, and the police are now going in different directions with this. It’s almost like this company has lost complete control of that. But do you not feel there’s a principle here that we betrayed, in terms of journalistic confidentiality? I mean that with respect, sir. I mean how do we ask sources of information to trust us in future when this has happened? It’s something that could possibly- will undermine the whole industry, never mind just this company. I just need to get that off my chest.”

RM: “Yes. We’ve got to correct that in some way, for the future. But you’ve got to protect sources. **In one**

case we paid a bundle, a huge bundle of money, it was at News of the World. But a woman then said she'd been hacked. I think we've got records of how we actually paid for them, legally, on round about ten occasions, where that information had come from, but I think some idiot at News of the World thought they'd better be careful. The law of libel is so tough. So they hacked it just to check, it would seem. I don't know, we've never seen [the private investigator's] diary. The cops have got it. But the people there said we can't disclose the fact that we first got all that information, on ten occasions, from somebody else, not the hacking thing at all. So, you know. Sure, I think you've got to protect your sources."

GD: "But yet you set up the MSC..."

Unidentified Sun journalist: "And yesterday – my lawyer's probably not going to thank me for saying this – but when I was interviewed Monday, the police put in front of me photocopies of my contacts book that they had taken from my office desk. That's disgraceful. And this company was complicit in giving that to them, by the actions of the MSC."

RM: "Well, we didn't go round collecting it, and saying here it is. They came and searched the offices."

GD: "Based on what the MSC had originally done."

RM: "They said, if you go to his office you'll find all this? I don't think so. **They [police] were in Rebekah's office for two days, thereabouts, when there were three executives in there with them. And they [police] say how they came in and got all this stuff against great resistance. But there was none. They [executives] were just watching. And they [police] didn't get anything worthwhile anyway, but that's another matter.**"

Unidentified Sun journalist: "The thing is, sir, that no one is in any doubt whatsoever that the [redacted] have done exactly what we've all done. As you say, it's this culture that went right across Fleet Street. But the difference has been that [redacted] we as a company, through the MSC, have willingly embraced what the police want from us."

RM: "All I can say is, for the last several months, we have told, the MSC has told, and Kathleen Harris, who's a terrific lawyer, has told the police, has said, 'No, no, no – get a court order. Deal with that.'

"They said, 'We will,' and, of course, it never happened... There's no channel at all."

Sun staffer: "It's a bit like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted for every one of us."

RM: "Oh absolutely, absolutely, you're right."

(Long pause.)

Unidentified person: "Anybody else, before we go? Can we-"

RM: "All I can say to you is that I feel terrible about it. But here we are."

Neil Millard (Sun reporter): "How much do you regret setting up the MSC in the first place?"

RM: "I don't know anything about that. I guess I wasn't focussed enough. But it came out of the News of the World, which I have told. The company had been in the wrong, and they had covered up. **And hacking was something which was- I mean, they knew they were breaking the law, because it was a very recent law. And everyone was piling in, saying, "Oh, we were hacked," when they weren't even mentioned in the paper."**

Unidentified Sun journalist: "One of the issues that we've not really addressed is the emotional pain and hurt for our families, and our wives and children. Deidre, as you know, is The Sun's agony aunt, has got a letter that- (turning to a colleague) do you want to explain this? As it's your wife."

Sun executive: "When we knew that we would be fortunate enough to meet with you today, my wife went off into the study, and came back with a letter that she presented to me, which she wanted me to pass on to you. And I felt, as Deidre's here, this is pretty much a broad representation of what most people caught up in this have gone through, and so, sort of handed it to Deidre to explain."

Deidre Sanders: "I think there are a lot of partners who would have liked to have been here today because they have been so affected by this as well."

(DS reads out letter from wife of Sun executive:)

Dear Mr Murdoch,

I thought I would take this opportunity to let you know what it's like to be a wife of one of your arrested and bailed journalists. We all feel much the same way: betrayed. Just over a year ago, lying in bed asleep, the phone rang. It was the Met Police asking how to find my home, as they were coming to arrest my husband.

I handed him the phone. I felt sick. I'd recently come out of... hospital having had a heart operation. I knew I had to keep calm, but didn't know what to do. My husband went to let the police in. There were 10 of them. I heard them charge him with conspiracy and corruption. It all felt surreal.

My husband, who loves News International, had been arrested for doing his job. The man who'd left family holidays mid-week because they needed him, who'd never been to a school nativity play or carol concert, who wouldn't even park on a yellow line, was being arrested at the hands of the company whom he'd worked so hard for.

After he'd been led away the police went into our house, room by room, looking for evidence. By then I was comforting my two-year-old grand-daughter, who was a witness to her grand-dad being led away to prison. The police left with all our old video-tapes: 'If you can't prove what's on it, we have to take it,' and a small bag of expenses sheets and letters from the editor etc. Seven hours later, after most of the TV crews had gone, he came home shattered by the unending questions, as well as by the betrayal at the hands of the MSC.

Many other partners had their underwear drawers rifled, cereal boxes emptied in front of their children, neighbours blocked in by a seemingly endless supply of police cars. A disgusting show of bullying. None of

our property has been returned.

So, time's passed and we've been left in a horrible limbo. Our relationships are at breaking point, some of the kids who watched their dads dragged away are still in counselling.

DS (aside to RM): "And I have to say as well, I know that some are starting counselling now."

(DS continues to read letter:)

And one 15-year-old girl has had her hair fall out in clumps because of the stress. Characters have changed. There have been suicide attempts. For what? A hideous political game: for what end? To save News International's integrity, put way before the well-being of its employees. They deserve better, these are... not the debris. They've been on the firing line, literally for you, and have loved every minute. Those people will never come back, they've been lost forever.

There appears to be no end in sight, and while the master of this drama has been sent to America to do some fancy new job, he's left behind a huge mess. A man who under oath at Leveson said, it's the fundamental right of all journalists to protect their sources, was happily handing the Met Police all the Sun's sources and contacts, along with payment details. Priceless.

He even sanctioned Powerscourt to brief the Press against us, using the phrase: 'Drain the swamp'.

Only last week one of the journalists was told he was going to be charged. His daughters took days off work-

RM (interjects): "That was a lawyer who said, 'Drain the swamp.'"

DS: "It's Powerscourt, the PR company."

RM: "They were briefed, yes."

(DS continues to read letter:)

Only last week one of the journalists was going to be charged. His daughters took days off work and university to support their distraught mum, only to have the police change their mind. He is of course still on bail, and just waiting for the next episode.

I'm waiting for March... when my husband's day is up again. Weeks of, 'What shall we do?' ifs, if he's charged, what happens afterwards? Will he ever be allowed to leave News International to go elsewhere? So, we're stuck between a rock and a hard place. He's a changed man. No longer do we have the same relationship. He is tortured, and as a consequence, so are we.

I've always admired you, and liked the fact that you had such a great family ethic. We're the families who made the sacrifices that allowed our partners to give you the loyalty and respect you sought. The husbands, wives and children, not to mention parents and friends who are all affected by the work of the MSC, feel abandoned and isolated.

There are men at the very top of their game who fear for their future. Their reputation's destroyed, and their freedom, possibly about to be taken away. Can you tell us what happens next?

[Name of letter writer redacted.]...

RM: "Thank you very much. That's very moving... I'll go and shove it down the throat of the company lawyers. That was the most ups-"

(Sun executive sobs.)

RM: "It's a very, very moving letter. Alright?"

MD: "That probably brings us to an end, anyway, doesn't it?"

RM: "Okay. Thank you very, very much, and I'm sorry it's like this. Sorry."

On Exaro tomorrow: listen to Rupert Murdoch speak to Sun staff at the private meeting at News UK's headquarters in an audio file, lasting more than 13 minutes, that pulls together his key comments