WE’LL BELIEVE IT WHEN WE SEE IT

Statement from the CPBF, March 19 2013

The legal basis for a new system of press regulation gives the national press a chance to commit themselves to a means of properly policing their own behaviour. The CPBF does not have great confidence that they will take this opportunity seriously.

The way it was introduced, by a series of surprise moves in Parliament, appears to have thrown the editors into disarray. They are now trying to decide whether to co-operate or to revert to type and refuse.

The new regulator itself is being set up by the office of the Press Complaints Commission. If the bigger, right-wing papers decide to boycott it there will be utter chaos.

The editors should remember that it is the conduct of the press, and the press alone, that has brought down this crisis upon their heads. And it is by their conduct and theirs alone that any new system will be judged, not by Parliamentary legalities.

The CPBF is pleased that the political parties have taken the issue seriously and persuaded the government to set up the structure.

But we will believe there has been a real improvement in self-regulation when we see the first front-page apology or the first million-pound fine, as trumpeted by David Cameron.

It would be even better if there were never any more false, deceitful or cruel stories that might lead to such penalties, but the CPBF has even less confidence in the likelihood of that.