

THE most surprising thing about the *Telegraph* "relaunch" is that the famously frugal chief executive Murdoch MacLennan has for once parted with some cash to hire new writers.

Advised by ex-*Grazia* editor Jane Bruton, he has agreed to hire Emma Freud to write columns about the agony of moving to New York for a year while renting out her Notting Hill home. Also welcomed aboard is one Linda Blair, producing a weekly dose of psychobabble called "Mind Healing".

What prompted such largesse from the parsimonious Scot? Simple: he actually turned a profit on it by forcing out more expensive staff at the same time. First to go was veteran art critic Richard Dornet, whose enforced "retirement" will save £100,000. Art shows will now be rotated among staff – for free – until a cheaper replacement can be found.

Also in the firing line was environmental pundit Geoffrey Lean, whose salary was a not so lean £150,000. *Telegraph* readers may be among the biggest climate deniers but even they could see Lean was an expert, and his views on recycling and the countryside frequently chimed with theirs.

Bruton is convinced that "expertise" is overrated and wants people who can turn out "zeitgeist" stuff instead. But there is another motive behind hiring Freud: to turn her into a cut-price version of £250,000-a-year Allison Pearson, whom MacLennan is bursting to fire for perceived treachery.

Meanwhile the features section may have been relaunched but there are so few writers left – precisely two, Joe Shute and Harry Wallop – that they have been told never to leave the office at the same time: at least one of them must always be at his desk, generating clickbait for the website.

But even the *Telegraph's* own writers are now going public to protest at the direness of its content. During Wimbledon fortnight the paper's rugby columnist Brian Moore linked to a *Telegraph* story about the quality of celebrities in the royal box, and gave his own verdict on it. "This," he tweeted, "is pathetic – from whichever angle you look at it, including that it is deemed news."

AN interesting juxtaposition in last Wednesday's *Daily Telegraph* crossword: the answers to 1 and 2 Down were "SUBS" "DIE AWAY", fittingly for a paper that has sacked most of its sub-editors.

Another group of juxtaposed answers in the same crossword included "PAY AND DISPLAY", "IMMORAL", "ABYSMAL" and "OWN GOAL". A cryptic reference to the paper's willingness to do editorial favours for paying advertisers? Surely not!

PLUGGING his dire book on Radio 2's *Jeremy Vine* show, Richard Desmond was happy to outline his key business strategy to listeners: "We really wait for our competitors to make mistakes, like Murdoch did with the *News of the World*, that was very helpful to the *Daily Star Sunday*."

Closure of *NotW* following the phone-hacking scandal did indeed lead to an astonishing 57.6 percent boost in sales for Desmond's title, which peaked at 880,000 copies one Sunday in 2011 – a feat he built on with four years of slashing and burning that sent weekly sales soaring all the way to, er, 258,000.

About one thing, however, he was totally clear: "I get upset with Russian, Kazakhstan, some of whom don't pay any tax, some of whom use this country as a sieve for taking profits out into other low-tax areas." And quite right, too. After all, he had the idea first.

As the *Eye* pointed out three years ago (*Eye* 1329), proud Brit Desmond set up no fewer than four companies in Luxembourg, which paid minimal taxes and received hundreds of millions

of pounds from his publishing empire, only to loan the cash back to his companies in the UK!

But perhaps the rounds of publicity are causing the ageing pornographer to become confused. Unable to fathom the resemblance of a student visiting the Radio 2 studio to his son, Robert, he told the young hack: "You never know, I might be your father" – and proceeded to call him "Robert" thereafter.

Desmond was back on track when speaking about his autobiography, though: "A third of people will love it, a third of people will hate it, and a third of people won't care. But at least I've got it on record for my kids..." Whoever they are.

BEMUSEMENT among hacks at a Broadcasting Press Guild event addressed by shadow culture secretary Chris Bryant last week, when arts correspondent for the *Mail on Sunday* Chris Hastings suddenly demoted himself and modestly declared to the MP that he was a mere toiler on the *Mail Online* website.

Did he perhaps wish to disassociate himself from the *Mail on Sunday's* 2003 exposure of Bryant's underpants in a photo he sent to an admirer on the dating website Gaydar? If so, he was in for an uncomfortable few minutes, as, introductions done, Bryant launched straight into his well-rehearsed spiel when addressing hacks: "I invented the selfie, as the *Mail on Sunday* so charmingly made available to the whole country. I didn't actually put it on a website, but the *Mail on Sunday* did."



"WHY this police spy photo of Michael McIntyre should make you fear for your privacy," wrote the *Daily Mail* last Friday.

Hack Ross Clark deplored the National Police Air Service, which had taken a shot of the comedian in Leicester Square and tweeted it, asking people if they could guess who it was from the top of his head. The NPAS, said Clark, had "infringed Mr McIntyre's privacy... at enormous cost to the public". It was disgraceful for the "flying bobbies" to spend their time "like a wannabe paparazzi [*sic*], taking snaps of celebrities".

What abominable snoopers! Such invasions of privacy should worry everybody. Moreover, they should be left to the professionals. One paper in particular has repeatedly violated McIntyre's privacy, printing photos of him going out for a meal with his wife (May 2015), parking his fancy new car at his family home (July 2014), on holiday with his wife and young son (February 2013), and out with his personal trainer (September 2010). Can you guess which paper?!

● The *Mail* and others also ran police helicopter photographs last year showing the romantic candlelit proposal of a "mysterious couple" in a London park, with a man caught kneeling down to pop the question by thermal camera from a Met police helicopter. The hacks had no qualms about intruding on the privacy of such a moment, even before the couple had been identified, and anyone had checked her answer was "yes". Nor did they question whether police should have released images not connected to crime-fighting.

IF THERE is one thing the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* have been able to agree on in the wake of Leveson, it is that state control of the media is A Very Bad Thing.

The merest sniff of a royal charter touching on press regulation would, both titles have implied, lead within hours to jackboots on the streets and the erection of vast statues of the glorious Hugh Grant in every city square.

So who can this be, pictured not so long ago



enjoying a chinwag at China's *People's Daily*, the state-run official organ of the country's ruling communist party? Why, it's Jonathan Harmsworth, 4th Viscount Rothermere and chairman of the *Daily Mail* and General Trust, who was meeting deputy editor-in-chief Yan Xiaoming to finalise details of a partnership between their two publishing groups!

THE piece about bullying *Independent* digital director Christian Broughton and his enormous unpopularity at the *Indy's* office (see last *Eye*) seems to have had an effect.

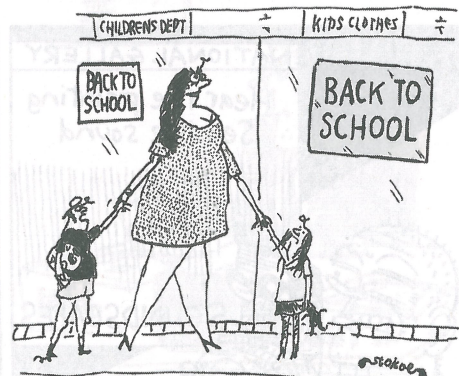
The morning after the piece was printed, a rather shamefaced Broughton pitched up at the office with a bag of champagne bottles and distributed them among a few select hacks to thank them "for all their hard work". A couple of days later, he emailed journalists who had struggled in through the tube strike thanking them for doing so: "Just wanted to say thanks and really very well played this morning... That, as they said on the Apollo missions, is the right stuff."

Will the new-found benevolent reign last? The *Indy's* downtrodden hacks aren't holding their breath...

THE *Church Times* joined the fight between the BBC and government recently with a polemic by ex-Fleet Street hack Paul Valley – now a professor of ethics at Chester University and a senior fellow at the Brooks World Poverty Institute in Manchester.

Valley saw a Tory "plot" to "emasculate the BBC" and attacked newspapers which "routinely put the commercial and political agenda of their proprietors before the good of wider society".

Only towards the end of the Rev Valley's fire and brimstone was there the six-word admission that "my wife works for the BBC". Indeed, Mrs Valley is a veritable lady bishop of the Beeb – head of radio at its Religion and Ethics department.



"But Mum, it's only the first day of the holidays"