

# The McCanns, Clarence Mitchell, Rupert Murdoch and the General Election result

An article by The Madeleine Foundation - 15 April 2010

A General Election will be held in three weeks' time.

In 1997, when Tony Blair was elected in triumph to the post of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the *Sun* claimed, with no little justification: 'It was the *Sun* wot won it'.

The *Sun* had switched sides a couple of years beforehand, backing Labour to win the election, and had proactively campaigned on their behalf through its news coverage and editorials. Richard Branson jumped on the bandwagon that night and just 'dropped in' on the Labour Party celebrations early in the morning, thus beginning over a decade of close co-operation between him and New Labour.

The *Sun* is owned by Rupert Murdoch. So is the *Times*, the *Sunday Times* and the *News of the World*, all part of his *News International* and *News Corporation* empires. He owns *BSkyB* and *Sky News*. He has many other media interests, including *Fox News* in the United States. In 1993, Murdoch acquired *Star TV*, now worth billions, and one of the biggest satellite TV networks in Asia.

In late 2003, Murdoch acquired a 34% stake in *Hughes Electronics*, operator of the largest American satellite TV system, *DirectTV*.

He added *Intermix Media Inc.* to his interests in 2005. They operate *MySpace* and other popular social networking websites. Months later he acquired *IGN Entertainment* for £500 million.

He is, arguably, the most powerful media figure in the world.

So why was it that in 2008, Conservative Party Leader David Cameron met Rupert Murdoch on his private yacht in the Mediterranean?

It emerged that Cameron had accepted free flights to hold private talks with Rupert Murdoch on his luxury yacht, *Roseheartly*, off the Greek island, Santorini. Cameron, however, failed to reveal his talks with Mr Murdoch in the House of Commons register of interests, merely declaring that on 16 August 2008, he and his family had accepted free flights provided by Matthew Freud.

His entry actually read: "16 August 2008, private plane from Farnborough to Istanbul for my wife and two children. Then from Istanbul to Santorini, and return to Dalaman, for myself, my wife and two children; provided by Matthew Freud, of London".

Cameron had been on a brief visit to Georgia at the time and met his wife in Istanbul. So far as we are aware, Mr Cameron has never discussed what he talked about with Rupert Murdoch. Mr Cameron has not broken Commons rules by not revealing the fact that he spoke to Rupert Murdoch and not disclosing anything about his talks with

him. Cameron talks the talk of 'democracy' and 'transparency' etc., but he does not walk the walk. He has kept silent about what the two men discussed.

The *Sun* switched its support from Labour to Conservative on 30 September 2009, about a year after the yacht meeting with Murdoch. Here's how the *Sun* triumphantly reported the reaction to this the following day:

#### QUOTE

LABOUR'S high command chumps got the hump with The *Sun* yesterday when we ditched them after 12 years. Angry Gordon Brown led the moaning with a grumpy performance on TV. The Prime Minister lost his temper during an interview that was being broadcast live on Sky News. He tried to walk off the set with his microphone still attached after a grilling by political anchorman Adam Boulton.

And Mr Brown's sidekick Lord Mandelson jokingly accused Britain's biggest newspaper of being 'chumps' after we threw our weight behind the Tories. *The PM was joined by a succession of Cabinet ministers lining up to shrug off our move.*

Labour's deputy leader Harriet Harman took a swipe at The *Sun*'s Page 3 girls. She opened a debate at the party conference in Brighton by saying she was speaking about 'something The *Sun* knows absolutely nothing about - equality'. Ms Harman went on: "Let's face it, the nearest their political analysis gets to women's rights is Page 3's News in Briefs". Then she told delegates: "We may be the underdog but we won't be bullied. This underdog is biting back".

Mr Brown then told TV stations: "It's the British people that decide the election, it's the British people's views that I am interested in. I think *Sun* readers actually, when they look at what I say, they will agree with what I said". Mr Brown's bad-tempered Sky News questioning showed the fury felt at the highest level at Labour's annual rally.

He repeatedly tried to talk about the economic slump but faced questions, instead, about The *Sun*'s withdrawal of support. *At the end of the interview he looked daggers at Mr Boulton before heading off - still tangled in the broadcasting gear.* In his eagerness to depart he forgot he was due to have a second interview with the BBC's Sian Williams in the same chair.

Former Labour leader Lord Kinnock was also peeved that The *Sun* had lost faith in Labour but tried to dismiss it. He said: "The Pope's a Catholic. That's how much surprise it gave me. "It's been obvious for a long, long time that they've been edging and edging."

#### UNQUOTE

It was not a very difficult decision for the *Sun* to make. At the time the Conservatives were running at between 15% and 20% ahead in the polls.

So who was the Matthew Freud who laid on his private plane for Mr Cameron? He's the owner and boss of one of Europe's leading media relations and communications

companies, Freud Communications, based in London. But of much greater significance, he's married to Rupert Murdoch's daughter, Elisabeth.

So, who is Clarence Mitchell and where does he fit into this picture? The answer: *right in the middle.*

In 2005, Mitchell was made Director of the 40-strong Media Monitoring Unit in the Central Office of Information. In an interview with the newspaper *Espresso* published on 29 September 2007, he boasted that his role there was to 'control what comes out in the media'. He was right at the heart of the Labour government's formidable public relations machine; one of their chief 'spinners'.

A year after his *Espresso* interview, Mitchell was employed by Matthew Freud of Freud Communications in an undisclosed capacity.

And on 4 March this year, Conservative Leader David Cameron appointed him as second-in-command to his chief media relations and communications adviser, formerly *News of the World* Editor, Andy Coulson. Cameron, Coulson and Mitchell therefore constituted a veritable clique of Murdoch contacts.

So, we may get a Conservative government on 7 May. If so, political control of the country will pass from Labour to Conservative.

But Murdoch will still control a huge media empire. And Clarence Mitchell, who has been close to Matthew Freud and Rupert Murdoch for the past 18 months, may well be at the heart of the Conservatives' new media manipulation team, just as he was for Tony Blair.

So what is the connection with the McCanns and the fate of their daughter Madeleine? Simply this: that on 7 May 2007, just four days after Madeleine was reported missing, Mitchell was appointed the McCanns' chief public relations adviser in what was to become one of the biggest international media stories of the past three years.

Why it was necessary for him to be transferred to the Foreign Office in May and fly out to Praia da Luz on 22 May is not known. He soon dominated media stories about the McCanns, setting up media-friendly interviews for them, shielding them from awkward questions, and so on.

Many others flew out there to 'help' - ostensibly to look for a missing child: three staff of Leicestershire Police, staff from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), and the National Police Intelligence Service and possibly MI5 as well - they were certainly involved at a later stage. Then there were at least two staff from the private intelligence agency Control Risks Group and two more staff from the 'crisis counselling' agency, the Centre for Crisis Psychology, plus staff of the British Embassy in Portugal and the Foreign Office.

The Director of Mark Warner, managers of the Ocean Club where Madeleine went missing, flew straightaway to Praia da Luz, and with him went the Head of Crisis Management at leading communications and media relations firm Bell Pottinger, Alex Woolfall. Just why so many important people rushed out to Praia da Luz remains very

unclear. Perhaps if we all knew why they did so, we would be closer to unravelling what Mitchell himself, on 19 February this year, called ‘a complete mystery’.

So we have Mitchell safely in position under David Cameron, the Conservatives a comfortable 7% to 8% ahead in the opinion polls, and Mitchell still on a retainer to advise and represent the McCanns in their public relations. Therefore there seems to be of little prospect that, if the Conservatives do get elected to government, there will be any change in the government’s position regarding the mystery of missing Madeleine.

It is doubtful if we shall see any serious effort by a Conservative government to try to get to the bottom of what really happened to Madeleine McCann. The promised ‘re-investigation’ of Madeleine’s disappearance, as recommended by CEOP Chief Executive Jim Gamble, will probably start, its hand tied behind its back from the outset by being limited to only exploring the possibility of Madeleine having been abducted, and not other possibilities. No doubt a Conservative government would continue to refuse, as Labour has done, demands for a public enquiry into the whole affair, or even a public inquest with all the material witnesses called to give evidence on oath.

Murdoch and Mitchell, between them, will have Cameron under their control.

Main source: *Daily Mail*:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1080179/Cameron-took-free-flights-Greece-meet-Rupert-Murdoch-luxury-yacht.html>

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