

Statement from Peace News Ltd Board, PNL Members, and Peace News Trustees Ltd

31st August 2024

The staff of Peace News have printed an issue of PN which includes 8 pages under the headline “Peace News To Close”.

The pages are biased and false in so many ways that we are unable to rebut every misrepresentation, correct every inaccuracy, or fill in every omission. Much of it is so extreme and personal that it would be foolish to reply without legal advice. We are not going to sink to their level of personal attacks and abuse.

Suffice to say that there are two sides to every argument.

There are several points we do feel able to make.

Peace News is published by Peace News Ltd (PNL), itself wholly owned by Peace News Trustees Ltd (PNT). Both companies are not-for-profits, whose directors are all unpaid. The staff are (paid) employees of PNL.

The staff have consistently overstepped their role as employees. To announce the “closure” of PN is the latest example. It is not theirs to close.

They resigned on August 14th. They were kept on for their two month notice period, in good faith, to produce their last edition. PNL directors said the issue should contain a joint statement; and staff could write a personal statement to readers, subject to directors’ approval. Instead, they published this issue unilaterally, having had no prior discussion with (let alone agreement by) their employers, or Trustees on whose funding Peace News and staff salaries, depend.

As directors of PNT and members/shareholders in PNL, we are successors of the people who founded the paper in 1936. It is our responsibility to work to their objectives, to build the paper’s effectiveness in promoting peace and nonviolence, and hand over to our successors in turn. The individuals named – and abused – by PN staff have long-time commitments to PN and the peace movement. They have integrity and good sense. They have not suddenly turned into monsters.

Peace News was in a long-term descent of ever-declining subscriptions, readership, and influence. It was locked-in to a paper publication in the age of digital media. PNT tried to institute structures to review its purpose, strategy, content, and marketing. At every turn these efforts were resisted by staff.

Staff refused to share and discuss editorial policy (if there was any). It turned out that they were developing a plan for the future – but incredibly kept this secret for six months *from the very people they expected to fund it!* Another six months on, they have never revealed what this plan might actually be.

This was just one example from of a year of acting in bad faith. They contradicted their own claims to openness and consensual decision-making with secretiveness, lies, dissembling, procrastination, breaches of confidence, and manipulation.

Staff claimed autonomy. As owners, funders and stewards of Peace News, PNT naturally expected accountability. When PNT placed two Trustees onto PNL's Board of seven (mirroring the two PNL people who were on the PNT Board), this was described as an "attack on PNL's autonomy". And here is their response to a request from PNT for quarterly editorial reports: "We see this as a breach of PN's editorial independence". The first quote is from 2024. The second dates back ten years, to 2014. Their intransigence was permanent; and the gap could not be bridged.

It is fitting that their last act was to publish eight whole pages of inaccurate and self-evidently biased vitriol directed against Peace News Trustees (who pay them), and against named individuals (who aren't paid at all). Staff did this clandestinely, and allowed no space for a different view. They published a leaked email without the author's knowledge or consent. These are not just terrible journalistic ethics, but are outrageous abuses of power designed to do maximum damage to *Peace News* before their departure.

To repeat, *Peace News* does not belong to the staff who were employed to produce it. It cannot be staff who are ultimately responsible for PN (especially when they have resigned). It is their employers Peace News Ltd, and through PNL, the owners and stewards – Peace News Trustees.

Glyn Carter, Albert Beale, Andrew Rigby

On behalf of Peace News Ltd and Peace News Trustees Ltd