

Why didn't the media go for Mandelson before now?

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Some of what is now being said about Peter Mandelson has long been known.

That is why questions about who knew what, when and why they did not say it will be raised long after he has slunk off somewhere to live out his days funded by some ne'er-do-well or other.

But I have a different question this morning, which is, why did the media whimper when they should have been barking?

The answer is, of course, obvious. English libel law is designed to protect the rich and powerful from scrutiny, whatever abuse they get up to, until that abuse is unavoidably in the public domain, when a free-for-all begins. I have no doubt that this is why much that should have been said has remained under wraps.

In that case, what we need, if we are to have a decent democracy (among many other necessary reforms), is a complete overhaul of UK libel law to significantly expand the public interest defence for disclosure. This should not allow invasion of privacy, but it should permit accountability. Without this, democracy is a farce whose lack of reach is something the wealthy, smug abuser can smile about unless and until they finally have nowhere to hide.

To be blunt, our libel laws are facilitating abuse. That is why they have to go.