
ADJUDICATION

1. This is an Adjudication of a complaint by Robert Bartlett, which he first sent to me on 29 June 2015. He complains that the Financial Times is not openly addressing alleged “*long-term precious metals price suppression*”, and relies on the withdrawal by FT.com of a July 2014 article by Madison Marriage on the topic.
2. Mr Bartlett has been in correspondence with various members of editorial staff, up to and including Deputy Editor John Thornhill, for almost 17 months. I have seen emails indicating that correspondence on this issue stretches back as early as February 2014.
3. Ignoring that I may have no jurisdiction over complaints that precede my appointment on 8 September 2014, the FT editor Lionel Barber has made clear to me that the piece was pulled from the website because it didn’t meet the FT’s editorial standards in respect of sourcing. It was, as John Thornhill explained to Mr Bartlett by email of 21 August 2014, “*overly-reliant on the findings of one London-based consultancy*”. He also sent Mr Bartlett a long list of links of FT articles on price suppression in gold markets.
4. There is clearly a disagreement between Mr Bartlett and FT editors as to what the story is, and the way in which it should be covered. Needless to say, it is no part of my job to adjudicate that dispute, or to investigate alleged criminal conspiracies to manipulate commodity markets.
5. Of fundamental importance to my role is that questions of which stories the FT covers (or does not), and how editors choose to cover them (or choose not to cover them), are paradigm examples of matters which are entirely in editors’ discretion. I do not have, nor would I want, any role in deciding the editorial line of the newspaper, and it would be a gross abuse of my position were I to seek to cause stories to be included, excluded, or covered differently.
6. My role is limited to adjudicating on breaches of the code. If a person had compelling *prima facie* evidence that a story was being suppressed by (for example) the bribing of editorial staff, or that journalists were personally involved in price fixing, that would be within my purview as an ethics issue. But this complaint is nowhere close to being that case. This is a reader who is unhappy because the newspaper isn’t covering a story as he would like it to be covered. I’m afraid the only appropriate remedy is for him to find another newspaper.
7. Nor is there any breach in the way the FT has handled Mr Bartlett’s complaint. Notwithstanding 17 months of emails, and the many sent to me in the last months or so, none of them actually disclosed even a *prima facie* breach of the FT Editorial Code of Practice. I applaud the patience hitherto displayed by editors and their support staff in dealing with emails from Mr Bartlett, whose correspondence now borders the vexatious. They should feel under no obligation to respond to him any further on this issue.

GREG CALLUS
Editorial Complaints Commissioner
Financial Times Ltd.