

## Murdoch: I decide Sun's politics

**Rupert Murdoch decides the political line of the Sun and News of the World, but not the Times and the Sunday Times, he has told a parliamentary committee.**

The News Corporation chairman said he was "a traditional proprietor" as far as the red-top papers were concerned.

He decides who they back in elections but an independent board prevents him doing the same with the Times titles.

His comments were made to a Lords committee investigating media ownership and have just been made public.

### 'Cannot interfere'

Minutes of the House of Lords communications committee, which took evidence from Mr Murdoch during a hearing in New York in September, record that he acknowledged he had "editorial control" over the Sun and the News of the World.

They read: "Mr Murdoch did not disguise the fact that he is hands-on both economically and editorially.

**" I'm all in favour of a free market but this isn't a free market "**  
Lord Fowler, committee chairman

"He exercises editorial control on major issues - like which party to back in a general election or policy on Europe."

But, according to the minutes, Mr Murdoch said the Times board was there to make sure he did not interfere in their titles and they added: "He never says 'Do this or that', although he often asks 'What are you doing?'".

"He explained that he 'nominates' the editors of these two papers, but that the nominations are subject to approval of the independent board.

"His first appointment of an editor of the Times split the board but was not rejected."

In other evidence, Mr Murdoch said Sky News could become "a proper alternative to the BBC" if it acted more like his US Fox News station.

"He stated that the only reason that Sky News was not more like Fox News was that 'nobody at Sky listens to me'," the minutes read.

### Ownership laws

Mr Murdoch, who was born in Australia, also complained that UK ownership laws prevented him, as a US citizen, from moving into regional evening newspapers and had led to an investigation by Ofcom into his stake in ITV.

The Lords committee's chairman, Lord Fowler, speaking to BBC Radio 4's The Week In Westminster, said he disagreed with Mr Murdoch on this point.

Lord Fowler said it was eccentric that a foreign owner could take over ITV, but that if a UK media

owner tried to take over a US company they would be legally barred from doing so.

He added: "There aren't reciprocal arrangements. I'm all in favour of a free market but this isn't a free market."

**Hear the full interview with Lord Fowler on the World This Weekend, BBC Radio 4, 1100 GMT Saturday.**

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