

Networked Knowledge Media Reports

[Networked Knowledge Evan Whitton Homepage](#)

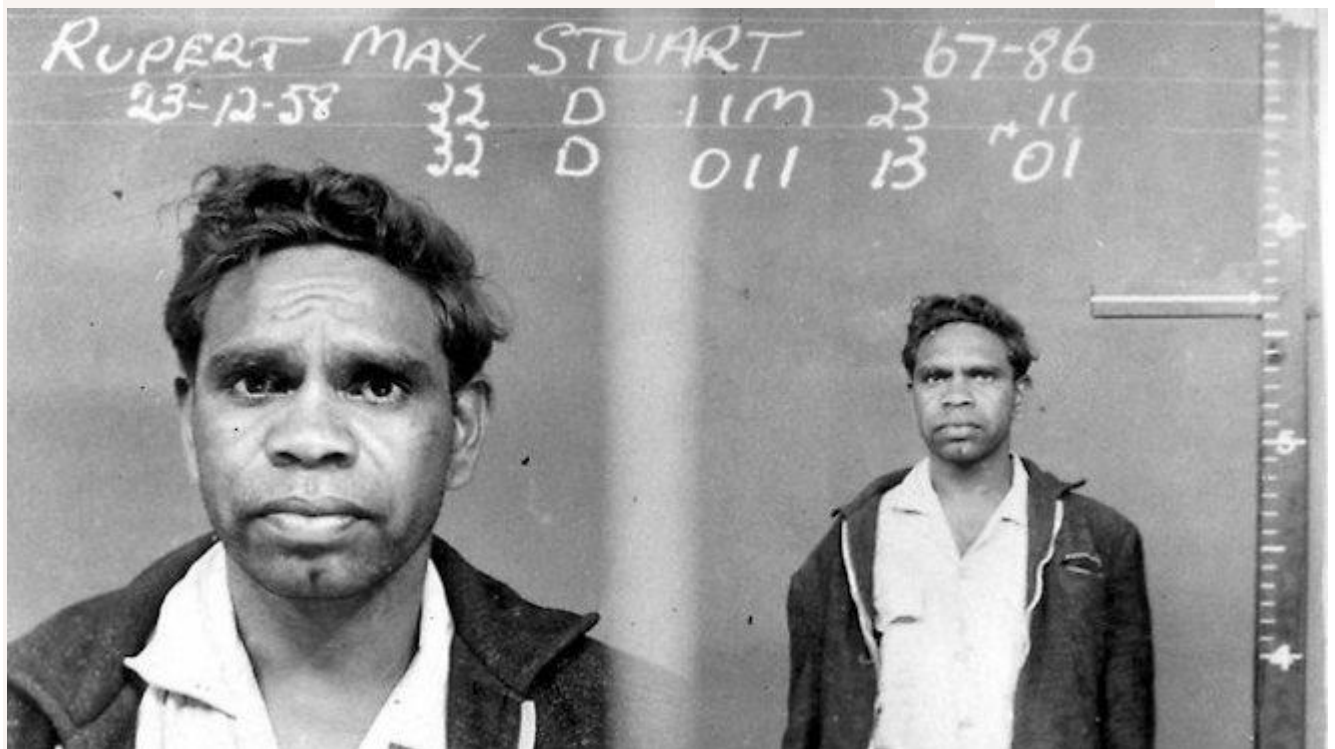
This page set up by [Dr Robert N Moles](#)

This article first appeared in *Justinian*, an Australian legal journal.

How Rupert Murdoch went bad

EVAN WHITTON • TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2016

According to Evan Whitton, Rupert Murdoch went bad 56 years ago, and stayed bad ... Always with an eye on the main chance for number one ... The Rupert Max Stuart affair ... The role of Sol Chandler ... Playing tootsies with Gorton and Whitlam ... Hacking and Milly Dowler ... Wilful blindness



Rupert Max Stuart: Murdoch did a deal to go soft on the Playford government

RUPERT Murdoch was not always evil. Born in 1931, he kept a bust of Lenin in his room at Oxford and supported the English Labour Party in 1951. Perhaps he hoped to make the world a better place, but nine years later he had to choose between that and making the world a better place for himself.

The choice concerned Rupert Max Stuart, an aboriginal convicted in 1959 of a murder he did not commit. He had a rock solid alibi, but the corrupt South Australian Premier, Tom Playford, was determined to hang Stuart; an execution was then a vote-winner. For details of what happens at a hanging see netk.net.au/Whitton.Amazing19.asp

Rohan Rivett, Murdoch's editor at the Adelaide *News*, saved Stuart from the gallows, and Playford was forced to commute the sentence to life in prison on October 5, 1959.

On January 19, 1960, Playford lodged absurd charges of criminal and seditious libel which put Rivett and Murdoch at risk of long prison terms. In March 1960, the jurors returned not guilty verdicts on all except one charge on which they could not agree.

News political reporter Ken May was the go-between for a deal consummated on June 6, 1960. Historian K.S. Inglis wrote:

"Many people believed that Playford dropped the last charge in return for an undertaking from Murdoch that the News would go easy on his government."

(Stuart was forgotten. Murdoch's later political chums included such dubious types as John Gorton, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Paul Keating, Tony Blair, and Donald Trump.)

Murdoch's sacked Rivett on July 12, 1960. Was that part of the deal with Playford? His treatment of a Fleet Street genius, Stanley (Sol) Chandler, may provide a pointer.

Chandler did something possibly unparalleled since Defoe invented modern journalism on February 10, 1704; he increased the circulation of Murdoch's Melbourne *Truth* from 220,000 to 400,000 in eight months to February 1967.

He did it by adhering to his belief that "the oldest rule of journalism ... is to tell the customers what is really going on". *Truth* was now hugely profitable.

Truth revealed in December 1967 that the new Prime Minister, John Gorton, was a thief: when Gorton's father died, Gorton and his wife held a board meeting and cut his father's mistress out of his will.



Gorton: did a deal with Murdoch

Murdoch sacked Chandler. Eight months later, Gorton gave Murdoch permission to use the profits of *Truth* and *The News* to buy *The News of the World* (NOW).

Murdoch's organs supported Gough Whitlam in his successful bid to become Prime Minister in December 1972. With John Menadue as go-between, Murdoch then asked Whitlam to make him High Commissioner in London. The post would have given him political connections which the sleazy *News of the World* never could. Whitlam declined; Murdoch did not forgive him.

A certain Noela Whitton began the process which led to Rupert Max Stuart being released on parole - after nearly 15 years in prison for a crime he did not commit - in October 1973.

Sol Chandler said: "We must not break the law." NOW employees broke the law by phone-hacking, which is the crime of theft of private information. Another crime is wilful blindness - could have known, should have known - to a crime. Was Murdoch aware of his employees' phone-hacking crimes? If not, was he wilfully blind?

It begins and ends with Milly Dowler. On 22 March 2002, Milly, 13, was on her way home from her Surrey school when she was abducted and murdered. Murdoch's NOW employees hacked Milly's phone during the six months before her body was found on September 18, 2002. Mentions of phone-hacking began in 2004. Thus:



NOW hacks hacked their way into the life of Milly Dowler

- February 2004. Steve Whattamore revealed to have supplied newspapers, including NOW, with hacked material.
- November 2005. NOW has a story on Prince William's knee injury. Royal Court officials complain about voicemail messages being intercepted. Police investigate.
- August 2006. Police arrest NOW royal affairs editor Clive Goodman and private investigator Glenn Mulcaire for hacking royal household mobile phones.
- January 2007. Goodman/Mulcaire plead guilty to conspiring to hack.



Murdoch on the Riviera:

found to be unfit to run a major corporation • December 2007. Murdoch's son James becomes chief executive of News Group Europe and Asia with oversight of News International, publisher of NOW.

- April 2008. James Murdoch is aware that News Group is paying Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, £400,000+ in a confidential settlement relating to NOW phone-hacking.

- April 2011. Three NOW reporters arrested on phone-hacking charges.

- July 4, 2011. *The Guardian* reports that Milly Dowler's phone had been hacked by NOW people while she was missing in 2002.

- July 7, 2011. Virgin Holidays, The Co-Operative Group, Ford, General Motors have withdrawn advertising from NOW; others considering their position. James Murdoch said NOW would close.

- July 10, 2011. NOW's last edition. Sol Chandler would have been amused.

- May 1, 2012, a parliamentary select committee reported that Rupert Murdoch "exhibited wilful blindness to what was going on in his companies and publications" and was "not a fit person to exercise the stewardship of a major international company".

Murdoch was not charged with the crime of wilful blindness.

Evan Whitton is a reporter/historian. China Fangzheng Press has translated and is to republish his eighth book, Our Corrupt Legal System. The English version is at netk.net.au/Whitton/OCLS.pdf.