TUC

Trades Union Congress

Sir Christopher Meyer KCMG
Chair, Press Complaints Commission
Halton House
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date:	31 July 2008
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Dear Sir Christopher,

Press reporting of disability

At the TUC Disability Conference this year, our members asked the TUC to write to you about their concerns at the way in which disability issues are sometimes treated in the press.

These concerns relate to the often patronising image of disabled people promoted in the media – the extremes of pathetic victim or extraordinary hero/ine – that serve to perpetuate popular misconceptions about disability and hinder the process of inclusion in society that is called for both by UK law and policy and international agreement (the UN Disability Convention that is to be ratified by the UK Government last this year). Since the debate at our conference, evidence has emerged that some reporting of the debate on welfare benefit reform has encouraged a climate of fear among disabled people receiving incapacity benefit, with a recorded increase in physical attacks on disabled claimants falsely considered to be "scroungers". In some regions of the country, these are now being investigated as examples of hate crime, following incendiary front page headlines in local newspapers. The vital need for responsible reporting could not be more clearly demonstrated.

I am aware that the National Union of Journalists is encouraging its members to adopt the correct approach to reporting on disabled people and on disability issues, and I would like to add the voice of the TUC to encourage your efforts to persuade media proprietors to adopt a similarly responsible approach.

Yours sincerely

Brendan Barber
General Secretary

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