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Press Complaints Commission

FOR CONSIDERATION FOR PUBLICATION

From the Chairman

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10th June 2003

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Dear Simon,

In asserting that "trust appears to be slipping away from the PCC", Vincent Graff's column ("The poor must trust the PCC", 10th June) makes a bad mistake of trying to build on Sara Cox's uncontested privacy action against The People far more than this modest structure can bear.

People have *always* had the option of going to Court – either directly or after using the services of the PCC – and the Cox case has therefore changed nothing. But it is hugely misleading to ignore the fact that legal challenges following complaints number no more than a dozen or so out of the 30,000 cases we have sorted out in the last twelve years. Who is kidding whom?

I am deeply perplexed, too, by the assertion that trust is "slipping away from the PCC." There are only two objective measures – rather than the wishful thinking of lawyers – on which public trust in the PCC can be gauged. One is the number of complaints which is now at record levels (but of which only about 15% relate to privacy – most being about accuracy). Why complain to a body you do not trust? The other is customer satisfaction. Our latest published survey results show that to be running at 70% - an admirable result for any regulatory body.

Finally, the article ignores the fact that all the recent legal judgements – remembering there was none in the Cox case – have in fact buttressed the authority of the PCC and its Code. Ford, Campbell and Flitcroft all highlight the crucial importance of the independent PCC as the arbiter in privacy matters.

So the Courts trust us. The complaining public – both in and out of the public eye - trusts us. Our customers are satisfied by the service they get, not least because it's free, fast and they don't need lawyers. In short, trust is not slipping away, it is building and will, I hope, be increased yet further by the proposals I recently made for how self regulation can evolve. You would do well to cast a more sceptical eye on those who assert the contrary, and why they are doing so.

*Yours ever,
Christopher*

Sir Christopher Meyer

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