



DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

**OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
26 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2WH**

*Tel: 020 7944 8623
Fax: 020 7944 8621*

Sir Christopher Meyer
Press Complaints Commission
1 Salisbury Square
London EC4Y 8JB

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Dear Sir Christopher,

Like thousands of others I read extracts from 'DC Confidential' serialised in the Daily Mail and the Guardian. I believe, by serialising this book, you have damaged public confidence in the PCC and you should certainly re-assess your position in that organisation.

How can I, or others criticised in your book, come to the PCC in future and expect impartiality when you have made it quite clear you are anything but? How can you now hope to be an 'honest-broker' at the PCC if people suspect they may feature in any future literary effort on your part? Furthermore, how can you carry out your obligation to prevent intrusion into peoples' private-lives when you are content to publish tittle-tattle on John Major's underwear?! These are serious questions especially when one takes into account that you waited until after you were re-appointed at the PCC before sitting down with the newspapers and negotiating serialisation deals on your book.

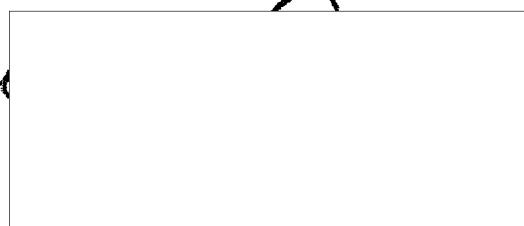
I am alarmed that you are perfectly happy to profit from tittle-tattle, betraying confidences and by character assassination – the kind of behaviour you at the PCC should be protecting the public from. The public will also have little confidence in you chairing the impartial PCC when they know you have sat down and negotiated financial deals with the editors you are supposed to regulate.

In your book you made great play of fighting for places at meetings in the White House, fearing that your non-attendance would damage your 'reputation'. For my own part, I know you were offended that you might have missed the chance to accompany

me to a meeting with Vice-President Gore when I visited Washington. It is true that I hoped one of my advisers would take your place. But after you made a fuss and claimed your reputation would suffer, I agreed you could join us. I must say, Vice-President Gore wasn't bothered either way. In fact, as far as your reputation in Washington goes, I later learned that many on Capitol Hill referred to you as the 'red-socked fop'. But this, of course, is tittle-tattle.

I believe it is unwise that someone in an apolitical role such as yours should wilfully provoke controversy. As a former Press Secretary you surely would have realised the impact of serialisation. Both newspapers now say money from the deal will be donated to a trust or charity (one closely associated with your family, I understand). But what about the profits you stand to make from book sales generated by the media attention you so deliberately manufactured?

I should be grateful if you would explain how you intend to carry out your duties as PCC Chairman with credibility and independence when you are perfectly happy to make money from the industry you are supposed to regulate. I am copying this letter to your colleagues on the PCC board in the hope that they might also let me have their observations on this conflict of interest.



JOHN PRESCOTT

cc. PCC Commissioners