

THE PRESS STANDARDS BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED

CHAIRMAN: TIM BOWDLER
SECRETARY & TREASURER:
JIM RAEBURN

TELEPHONE: 0131 240 3270 FACSIMILE: 0131 220 4344
E-MAIL: info@pressbof.org.uk

48 PALMERSTON PLACE
EDINBURGH EH12 5DE

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Rt. Hon John Prescott MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
26 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2WH

Dear Mr Prescott,

Chairman, Press Complaints Commission

I am responding on behalf of the Directors of PressBoF to your letter of 2 December to Sir Christopher Meyer and to the various points which you raised.

The PCC's Articles of Association stating that "the Chairman shall not be engaged in or, otherwise than by his office as Chairman, connected with or interested in the business of publishing newspapers, periodicals or magazines" were specifically intended to preclude a publisher or editor from becoming Chairman. The PressBoF Directors are clear that the newspaper serialisation of Sir Christopher's book does not constitute a breach of the Articles.

The structure and procedures of the PCC provide substantial safeguards against any potential conflict of interest, whether real or perceived and therefore including those envisaged in your letter. Decisions are made by the Commission as a whole of which a clear majority are independent members of the public. There is a well-established procedure to exclude any members, including the Chairman, from consideration of any complaint where there is a conflict of interest. Complainants can be totally assured that their cases will be handled with absolute propriety.

The role of PressBoF is to ensure that the PCC is equipped to carry out self-regulation of the press in an effective, fair and impartial manner. Sir Christopher has done a first class job as its Chairman since taking up his appointment in April 2003. The Directors of PressBoF remain confident in his ability to continue to do so in the future.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bowdler
Chairman