

PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

From the Chairman

Murdoch MacLennan Esq
The Newspaper Publishers Association Ltd
34 Southwark Bridge Road
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14th September 2006

Jean Murdoch,

I have just seen your letter of 11th August on my return from holiday.

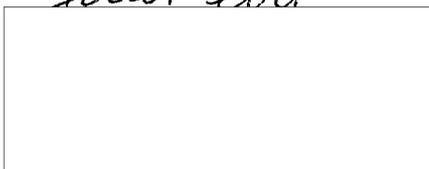
This seems to me one of those situations in which you have to plot a difficult course between alarmism and complacency. Taken together, the list of actual and potential threats to press freedom, which you list in your letter, look pretty disturbing. From my own experience, in government, I am inclined to see this accumulation of threats as more accidental than deliberate, though, as Pravda used to say, "life itself" can always transform the former into the latter.

Either way, eternal vigilance has to be the motto. For our own part at the PCC, we remain in robust communication with the Information Commissioner on the Data Protection Act; have written to Harriet Harman about the dangers to press freedom in the draft Coroners Bill; and continue to argue the case in Ireland for non-statute based press regulation. I am going to give a speech in Brussels later this autumn, which will argue the case for our model of self-regulation and explain, yet again, how it works.

You are quite right to include the EU in the inventory of potential threats. That is why I have pressed hard for agreement from your industry that the PCC, subject to suitable definitions, should be competent to take complaints about editorially-controlled audio-visual content on newspaper web-sites. It will be crucial for me to be able to say when I am in Brussels that this is agreed at least in principle. The European Commission has never seen a vacuum, which it does not want to fill.

I am copying this letter to Tim Bowdler.

Your sincerely



Sir Christopher Meyer

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