

From the Director

Sir David Bell
Chairman
Pearson plc
80 Strand
London WC2R 0RL

16 February 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dear Sir David". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

I know that Christopher Meyer is going to send an initial response to the Media Standards Trust shortly, but I wanted to write to you in your capacity as Chairman of the Trust to ask you to look at something that has personally deeply concerned me about the way in which your report has been presented publicly.

During your lively exchange on the Today programme last week, Christopher mentioned – and I think you accepted – that the Trust has not involved the PCC in its inquiry to date. That, you said, was going to happen during ‘Stage 2’. The first we knew about the report was on the afternoon of Friday 6th February, when we received an embargoed copy. At no stage were any questions put to us verbally or in writing, or any requests for any input or clarification made, and no-one from the Trust told us that the report was underway.

That is a matter for the report’s authors, and the Trust itself. But I am astonished that the Trust’s Director, Martin Moore, contradicted Christopher’s truthful assertion that the Trust didn’t talk to the PCC in the preparation of this report. On 9th February, *Journalism.co.uk* reported:

CHAIRMAN
Sir Christopher Meyer

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Peter Wright

DIRECTOR
Tim Toulmin



“Martin Moore, who spoke to *Journalism.co.uk* after the broadcast, said Meyer’s comment about consultation was ‘wrong’, but Bell had not denied it during he broadcast because he had not been involved in the process himself.

‘We spoke to the Director; we spoke to the Deputy Director’ [he said].”

Martin also commented on the blog of POLIS Director Charlie Beckett, who had mentioned Christopher’s claim on the Today programme:

“Oh, and we did speak to the PCC. To the Director, and to the Deputy Director.”

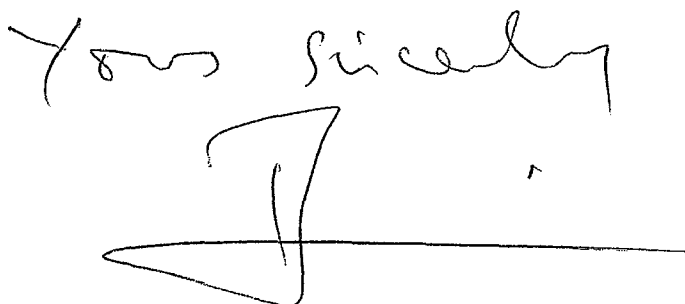
This is completely untrue. I have of course met Martin before, and taken him out to lunch on one occasion, in 2007 I think, because of his role at the MST. My deputy had a coffee with him last May. These were informal, friendly meetings which were not interviews about the PCC’s performance but rather general chats. At no stage were specific points put to us in any proper way, as you will know from the absence of any ‘paper trail’. The fact that Christopher has received a formal, written invitation to take part in Stage 2 of the report, but heard nothing from the Trust in relation to Stage 1, rather underlines the dishonesty in trying publicly to pass off old, informal and unrecorded conversations as proper evidence-taking.

I think this behaviour is reprehensible. There is no doubt that the public has been misled, and I would be most grateful if you could look into this urgently. At the very least, I think an apology to me and my deputy, Stephen Abell, is in order.

We have one or two other concerns about how the Trust has approached this whole process, which we may need to address before deciding whether there is any proper basis for collaboration with the MST going forward.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely


Tim Toulmin

