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Sir Christopher Meyer
Press Complaints Commission
1 Salisbury square
LONDON
EC4Y 8JB

.....28-11-03

TT
Pl. send suitable,
polite reply.
E 3/12

(Tel - 020 7583 2264)

Dear Sir Christopher

Could I float an idea with you?

With regard to inaccuracy, libel or flouting of the rules by the Press I feel that the 'punishment should fit the crime'.

My idea is that the person who has suffered should have the right to EXACTLY THE SAME SPACE/COVERAGE that was used to libel him/her to make *their* statement, or to correct the inaccurate statement.

This has three advantages.

1. It is extremely obvious, and so an embarrassment to the Editor and publication concerned, and will certainly come to the notice of the owner/publisher in a way that a tiny one-line retraction in the 'graveyard' of the paper will never do.
2. If it keeps happening it is extremely unattractive to readers and casts doubt in their minds as to the 'worth' of the papers reporting and might have impact on sales
3. It might be that to the rich, famous and most libelled, this would be a better alternative than the increasingly risky and perverse Court cases and cash awards.

The right to the space should be passed in law ie not subject to a Voluntary code as now.

A refinement might be that the Press Complaints Commission is made the arbiter and judge of how much space would be allocated to the complainant. The allocation would depend on strength or damage caused by the libel/inaccuracy. It could be the from the single line retraction all the way up to the full multi page retraction (in the case of the recent Mirror/Buckingham Palace case). Continuing infractions could be punished by an increase in space demanded to correct infringements.

It seems to me that this is not only fair, it can be seen to be fair.
It upholds the freedom of speech that underwrites the existence of our wonderful press.

Not just for them, but for the ordinary citizen too. It gives redress to the powerless citizen to be heard when he has been wronged by a large and powerful organisation. Isn't this at the core of the PCC's charter?

Would you please give serious consideration to taking up this idea?
And if you can't, could I have cogent reasons as to why you cannot try to have the idea accepted?

Yours sincerely

Andrew Biddlecombe
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