

FROM CLIVE SOLEY MP



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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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12 January 2004

Dear Sir Christopher

I enclose a Point of Order I raised in the House before Christmas.

I would draw your attention to paragraph three, and would welcome the Commission's views as to whether the recommendation - that there should be a clear public interest to justify covert tape recording - should not be equally applied to other citizens?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

CLIVE SOLEY MP

Sir Christopher Meyer  
Chairman  
Press Complaints Commission  
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LONDON  
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FROM CHIEF CLERK MR



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POINT OF ORDER

DECEMBER 16 2003

Mr Speaker

You may remember that on 11 November I raised a Point of Order on News International. Since then, I have written to Mr Rupert Murdoch, Chairman of the parent company, seeking clarification of some points. However, another event took place following that Point of Order which I felt I should draw to your attention, and to the attention of the House.

I have been aware for a couple of years that a small number of journalists do tape record conversations with MPs. It is important to remember that a small number of MPs also tape record conversations with journalists.

Mr Speaker, although I am raising this issue in relation to MPs and journalists, I shall also raise it with the Press Complaints Commission because it equally applies to other citizens. May I suggest, Mr Speaker, that anyone in the House of Commons should only tape record conversations in one of two circumstances: either where they have told the other person before the conversation and the other when they have a good reason not to do so in order to reveal, or prevent, a serious – and I mean serious, not some trivial matter of personal and private behaviour – wrongdoing. I am advised that if a tape recording were made without consent, and a third party were then allowed to hear it, a criminal offence might have been committed by the person who recorded the conversation.

Mr Speaker, a final point I would like to draw to your attention. Following my earlier Point of Order on 11 November, an approach was made to me on behalf of a News International paper, suggesting that I should state “my negotiating position”. Make what you will of this, but I have no negotiating position other than to get News International to deal properly with its internal problems.

The suggestion made to me is rather difficult to understand but leaves a rather worrying taste in the mouth.