

THE PRESS STANDARDS BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED

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Rt Hon Denis MacShane MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr MacShane,

Chairman, Press Complaints Commission

I feel it is appropriate that given that the appointment of the Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission and the terms of his employment are the sole responsibility of The Press Standards Board of Finance Ltd (PressBoF) I should respond to your representations about Sir Christopher Meyer set out in your letter to PCC Commissioners.

I start with your reference to the PCC's Articles of Association which I have to say were intended to preclude a publisher or editor from becoming Chairman. The newspaper serialization of Sir Christopher's book does not in the opinion of the PressBoF Directors constitute a breach of the Articles.

The fundamental issue however is that the public should continue to have confidence in the PCC providing a fair and impartial means of adjudicating on their complaints. While I appreciate that you and some of your colleagues may question whether following the newspaper serialization of his book Sir Christopher can be truly independent, you should be aware that the whole structure of the PCC and its procedures provide substantial safeguards against conflicts of interest be they real or perceived. Decisions are of course made by the Commission as a whole, ten of whom – a clear majority – are members of the public. Furthermore, the Chairman would also follow the well established practice applicable to all Commission members of not taking part in the consideration of any complaint where there is a possible conflict of interest. Complainants can therefore be assured that their cases will be handled with absolute propriety.

It is widely recognized that Sir Christopher has done a first class job as Chairman of the PCC since taking up his appointment in April 2003. I have to say that the PressBoF Directors remain confident in his ability to continue to do so in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Raeburn
Secretary & Treasurer