

PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

From the Chairman

Howell James Esq CBE
Permanent Secretary
Government Communications
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

12th April 2007

Dear Howell,

Thank you very much for agreeing to see Tim Toulmin and me on 1 May. We want to take your mind on the following.

Over the last few years we at the PCC have made a big effort to publicise throughout the UK how the organisation operates and the services that we can provide to members of the public, who, for whatever reason, run foul of newspapers and magazines. This effort will continue, notably through our travelling road show to cities and towns up and down the country and the continuing development of our web-site.

But a number of things have conspired recently to bring home to us that in London itself awareness of the PCC, and knowledge of how we work, leave much to be desired. According to surveys which we have recently commissioned, this seems particularly to be the case among MPs and civil servants, including even government press departments. We picked up a similar message around the recent hearing of the CMS Select Committee into press matters. This led us to invite John Whittingdale and his colleagues on the Committee to spend a morning at Halton House, where they met staff, discussed cases and looked at a few files. I kept out of the way so that discussion would be as uninhibited as possible! The MPs said afterwards that they had found the experience invaluable and that they had learnt much that they did not know before.

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Sir Christopher Meyer

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We think we should have more of these Halton House open days for, among others, permanent secretaries and government press officers. In addition, we would like to develop other lines of communication with Whitehall, for example, by compiling a distribution list to cover departments and agencies, to whom we would send out briefing papers, contact details and so forth.

We do not want to move ahead on this front without talking to you first – which we now look forward to doing on 1 May. We will, of course, be happy to discuss any other aspect of our work.

*Yours ever,
Christopher*

Sir Christopher Meyer

