

From Clive Soley MP



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08 September 2003

Sir Christopher Meyer KCMG
Chairman
Press Complaints Commission
1 Salisbury Square
LONDON
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Dear Sir Christopher

I suspect that neither the media nor politics will emerge well from the Hutton Report. There has been an increasing level of distrust of politicians and journalists by the public over recent years and it is profoundly damaging. My natural pessimism is born out of years of calling for reform to save both our souls without much evidence of success!

As this issue is too important to be ignored I have given more thought to how we could engage the question of rebuilding public confidence in journalism and politics. I am hoping to persuade the Westminster Media Forum to run a conference on this in the near future and if they do I assume the PCC would want to participate.

In the meantime however I wondered if we could examine some proposals which may help build public confidence in the press. Perhaps we could meet to discuss the following suggestions to see if the press may be persuaded via your office to consider some changes?

1. All newspapers to carry a clearly identified corrections column with subheadings for each correction, identifying the original story.
2. All newspapers should clearly identify key senior staff, especially editors.
3. A permanent box advertisement drawing attention to the PCC and its role.
4. A new approach to separating news from comment by splitting the story into two parts one headed 'news' and the other headed 'comment'. This is a radical suggestion but on some occasions it already happens. The Daily Mail for example sometimes runs a front page campaigning story headed 'Comment'.



2.

You may well have a different agenda but I suspect there are areas of current press practice which you feel ought to change. If you think we could thrash out some of these issues in a confidential but supportive way then we might achieve more than has so far proved possible.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clive Soley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

CLIVE SOLEY MP