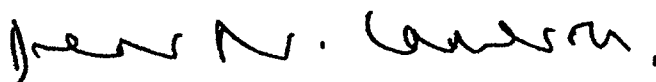


PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

From the Director

10 October 2006

Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP
Leader of the Opposition
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

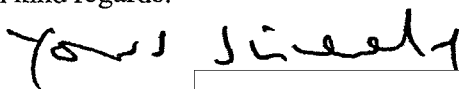


I enjoyed your speech last week, and was interested in its emphasis on 'social responsibility'.

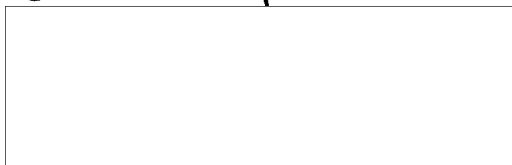
The practice of social responsibility will of course vary depending on the sector and activity concerned. But just by way of a small plug, we have a model for the regulation of press content that involves a few key features that might interest you, and which might in some circumstances translate elsewhere. I think they amount to a form of social or corporate responsibility, because the system is not dependent on the state while at the same time performing a public function. The industry takes responsibility for setting standards and ensuring that its members comply with them, but hands over the regulatory function to an independent body (the PCC) which includes only a minority of industry representatives. The significant public input into the system (all members of staff, 60% of the board of directors, and the independent external reviewer are all non-industry figures) means that it is in fact an example of non-statutory civil regulation. There is no cost to the taxpayer, but accountability nonetheless in a number of forms: to an independent external review panel, to the courts in the event of judicial review, and to Parliament at Select Committee enquiries.

It took a number of years to get this balance right, and it is a little-known fact that the press in the UK has gone further than any other in Europe in ceding decision making on complaints about editorial content to an independent body. We are of course in contact with Hugo Swire and the Shadow CMS team, but I thought I would write in the context of your emphasis on social responsibility in case our model might be of some interest.

With kind regards.



Tim Toulmin



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