

# Sir Christopher bids farewell: judges, privacy and bollocks

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Former Washington ambassador and chair of the [Press Complaints Commission](#) Sir Christopher Meyer is on his valedictory tour and is taking the opportunity to plug his next book, bid for jobs and warn of grave threats to the newspaper industry from judges and, interestingly, bad management.

His next work is a history of diplomacy including a BBC serial and appropriately he did avoid saying anything too controversial at his [London College of Communication/Media Society talk](#).

But he launched a few squibs:

*“Most worrying of all is the hollowing out of newspapers. There is a perfect storm of digital investment combined with the credit crunch that could empty newspapers of their editorial strength”*

The biggest threat to press freedom are the judges:

*“The British press is increasingly constrained by legislative constraint especially libel law. The legal space within which newspaper can operate is increasing smaller.”*

On privacy law:

*“When I was at Downing Street under John Major before 97 they considered a Privacy White Paper but it was clear that it would have been impossible to draft and a Rich Man’s Charter so it was abandoned. Now the judiciary is bringing one in through their judgements related to the Human Rights Act.”*

Overall, Sir Christopher believes that his tenure at the PCC has resulted in a better system to curb the excesses of the British written press, although he accepts it is hardly perfect.

The PCC has made self-regulation work as well as it can with such as proprietorial, partial press as we enjoy in the UK. He has certainly helped those of us who would prefer that kind of model for new media rather than the more controlling model that has governed broadcasting.

[Press Gazette](#) also reported on the talk. They feature Sir Christopher’s response to the accusation that the PCC is too weak: “bollocks”.

[Here’s](#) the Guardian’s [report](#) on the event.

The [Media Society website](#) also has a full report.

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