

The fop strikes back

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For nearly forty years [Sir Christopher Meyer](#) 'lied for his country' as someone once described the arts of diplomacy. As a press spokesman for Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe and Prime Minister John Major he dealt with journalists on a daily basis during some of the bloodiest periods of British politics. As British Ambassador in Washington he was the Labour Government's voice in the US during the run up to the last Iraq War. When he published his controversial [memoirs](#) of the period he was accused by John Prescott of being a 'red-socked fop'. So if anyone knows about the inner workings of politicians and the press, he should.

Last night at a [POLIS](#) lecture Sir Christopher, who is now Chairman of the [Press Complaints Commission](#), saw things from the other side, and he wasn't happy with the view.

"I believe the boundaries of freedom of expression seem to be closing in" he warned, in a speech which highlighted a whole range of ways that journalists are being restricted in their quest for the truth. One measure is the proposals to charge for Freedom Of Information requests:

"When you read that after two year, there are proposals to make it more difficult to obtain information under the Freedom of Information Act, you have to worry." he told the audience at the LSE.

But Meyer was worried about the changes in the culture of government/media relations as well as changes in the law. He pointed out how in his day, departments like the Foreign Office gave daily "on the record" briefings to hacks, now they only hold press conferences when the Foreign Secretary has something to say.

"In 2006 it is harder to find out what is going on in government than it was 10 years ago" he concluded.

We hope to have a video podcast of last night's speech available later today.

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