

PCC rejects complaint from Alex Salmond MSP

The Press Complaints Commission has not upheld a complaint against the Scottish Mail on Sunday from the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond MP, under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Editors' Code of Practice.

The complaint concerned two articles. The first had reported that Mr. Salmond was at the centre of an immigration "scandal" after "lobbying for an illegal immigrant facing drugs charges to be allowed to stay in Scotland"; while the second claimed that Mr. Salmond was "facing a Westminster investigation" as a result of writing to the Home Office in support of the man's application.

Mr. Salmond argued that the articles were inaccurate and misleading. At the time of his letter to the Home Office, he had been unaware of both the man's background and the existence of an outstanding criminal warrant. It was incorrect for the paper to suggest (primarily in a quote from an MP) that he had stepped outside normal parliamentary procedures in writing to the Home Secretary. In addition, the fact that the article in question was published before a complaint had been received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards rendered the claim that he was facing a "probe" into his conduct untrue.

The Commission did not find a breach of the Code, ruling that the essential facts of the story were "accurately reflected in the articles under complaint". The newspaper was entitled to publish the comments of opposition MPs - even if the complainant disagreed with them - and considered that such criticisms "were distinguished as comment in accordance with the terms of the Code".

In terms of the reference in the report to an "investigation" by the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner, both parties had accepted that a complaint had eventually been received which he was bound to consider. The Commission ruled that the newspaper's claims (that the complainant was facing a "probe" and that the Commissioner would "now consider if there is enough evidence to justify a preliminary inquiry") had not suggested that proceedings were already underway at the time of the article. Nor did the newspaper speculate as to the outcome of the Commissioner's considerations. Furthermore, a third article had subsequently made clear that the matter was not eventually pursued and that Mr. Salmond had not been subject to any disciplinary action. The newspaper was obliged to report this outcome, having already referred to the existence of the complaint to the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner. The Commission ruled that this clarified the position appropriately.

To read the full adjudication please click [here](#).

ENDS

Note to editors:

1. Peter Wright, the editor of The Mail on Sunday, is a member of the Commission. He took no part in the PCC's deliberations on this complaint, and left the room when it was discussed. He did not see any correspondence connected to the case.
2. For further information, please contact Jonathan Collett on 020 7831 0022 or 07740 896805.

18 June 2010