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From Controller, Editorial Policy

Ben Bradshaw, MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

1st July 2003

By Post and Fax: 020 7219 0950

Dear Ben,

Thank you for your letter.

Richard Sambrook has made a very detailed response to the questions that were posed to Alistair Campbell which covers many, if not most, of the points that you raise.

As to your specific questions about the Producers' Guidelines, I am satisfied that the reliance on a single source (provided that source is credible and in a position to know what they are talking about) is not in conflict with our guideline on accuracy. As you will know from your own experience as a journalist and politician, political journalism would virtually cease in both print and broadcast media if every report relied on several sources. The key test is rigorous editorial judgement based on a reliable journalistic process. The original report on the Today programme met that criterion, with Government ministers given the opportunity to respond then and subsequently.

Incidentally, the guideline that you cite on anonymity relates to situations where programmes are seeking to talk to people in trouble with the law.

The Guidelines are a public statement of our editorial values. I am confident from what I know of the circumstances that they were followed. We will, of course, go on reporting the responses of the government, the wider public debate, and the findings of committees of the House, fully, fairly, and impartially.

I am releasing this letter to the press.

Yours

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