

Sir Harold Walker:

Dear Code of Practice Committee

I suggest that the Code needs to be strengthened where images are concerned.

Under its first heading – Clause 1: Accuracy – the Code states that “The Press must take care not to publish inaccuracies, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text”. The website states the following in amplification of the Code: “Clause 1 (Accuracy) prohibits the publication of inaccuracies, misleading or distorted material which includes pictures”.

I suggest that the press frequently publishes pictures which are misleading or distorted in that, for example, photographs of two different people on two different occasions are often amalgamated without any indication that this has been done. The individual pictures are accurate, but the amalgamation of them can be misleading.

To take a particular example, I refer to the Sunday Telegraph of 12 January. On the front page there is a photograph of the Queen, the Duchess of Cornwall and the Duchess of Cambridge posed together. On page 23 there is a further photograph of the same three walking together. I strongly suspect that both these images have been doctored, in the sense that three separate photographs have been merged; no indication that this amalgamation has taken place is given. I suspect that the Telegraph have distorted the images in order to support a story-line that the Queen, the Duchess of Cornwall and the Duchess of Cambridge have in some sense ganged up on the Duchess of Sussex.

For the protection of readers some wording needs to be found that will prevent Editors from manipulating images: they should be required to print images, including photographs, in their original form unless they provide some indication that a doctoring process has taken place. Finding wording appropriate to the Code is beyond me, but something is needed along the following lines: “Images, including photographs, should normally be printed in their original form: if they are air-brushed, merged with other images or otherwise doctored an indication must be given”.

Yours sincerely

Sir Harold Walker