"All that is needed for evil to prosper is for people of good will to do nothing"—Edmund Burke

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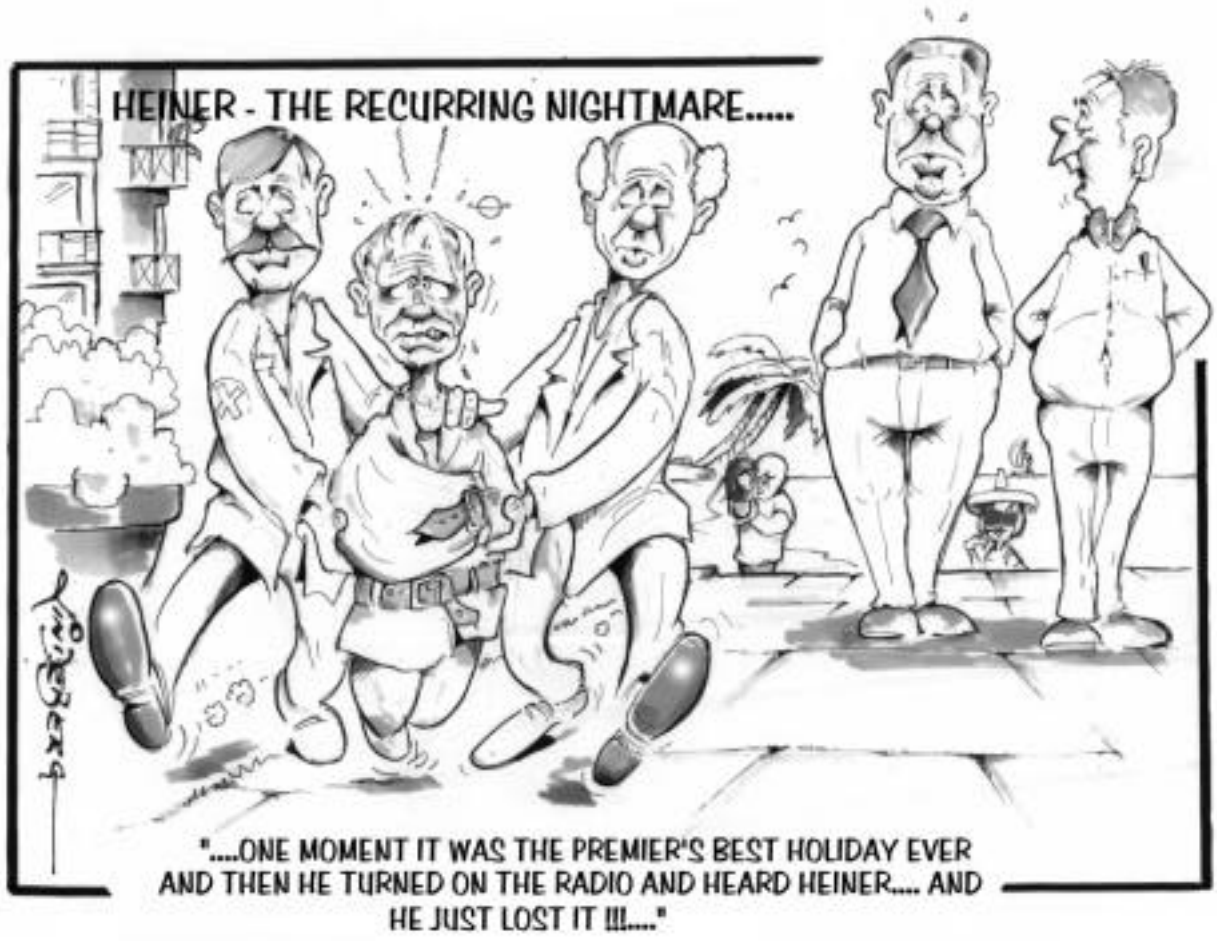

Media watch

Civil debate needs to recognise the role of society's canaries

Dissident voices are often an important warning sign that organisations are in trouble, writes ***Eva Cox.***

Sydney Morning Herald, 27 January 2003, p. 19

RICK Farley's Australia Day address finished with a plea for a civil conversation on our country's future, which I strongly endorse. I want to open the question further by suggesting that the very necessary space for civil conversations requires recognising the contribution of publicly difficult people to the public good.

The question of the role of dissident voices was raised by *Time* magazine's selection of three female corporate whistleblowers as their people of the year. Rather than reviling those that disrupt and create problems in organisations, the more compliant members of society should recognise our value.

We very often perform the same function as canaries once did in mines — act as early warning signs that something is wrong. A smattering of us being relatively silent means that an organisation is being well run. A clatter of dissent and problems should be seen as indications of organisational problems, not of individual problem people.

The question of when to speak out and protest/object to what is happening was personal for me in the past couple of weeks as I ran unsuccessfully for the NRMA board.

The winners' media managers made sure that all their opposition were branded as troublemakers who kept asking for meetings and going to court. This tactic avoids the question of whether the dissident directors were right to be concerned. Loyalty is the virtuous hallmark for the new president's board and he has stated that he intends to stop the leaks.

A few days ago I downloaded an email promoting a workshop on how to handle difficult behaviours at work and wondered how well it would have gone down at HIH.

The contrast with the NRMA is clear: at the same time as people from HIH were pilloried because they had failed to ask questions and raise issues, we were being criticised for doing it. So, too much silence and loyalty are also problematic.

The culture of HIH is reported as attacking the messengers, so there were no incentives for doing the right thing. The few raising their concerns were ignored, counselled to be silent and sometimes lost their jobs. The results have been a major corporate collapse with terrible consequences for many customers and employees.

Cultures of silencing dissenting voices seem therefore not to be necessarily virtuous but may often be dysfunctional and toxic.

Similar questions have been raised in many other corporate collapses and many stories of people being silenced by the power of the way we do things round here.

I wonder what will happen to those three women on the Time cover over the next few years - whether they will be seen as heroes or untrustworthy.

Creating the types of workplace environments which encourage people to raise issues of concern requires acceptance that harmony sometimes needs to be disrupted.

If an organisation, large or small, is considered generally trustworthy and ethical by most of its stakeholders, it can respond to criticism and problems.

Therefore the problem is likely to be in the culture of the organisation and its inability to solve conflicts fairly and effectively.

So maybe we need to question those organisations which value only people who fit the prevailing cultures and exclude those with differing opinions and complaints.

Silencing dissident voices also often silences new ideas and work improvements, creating groups with little capacity to deal with change or difficulties.

Yes, this is special pleading as I am a classic dissident and I do recognise this may create discomfort for others.

I realise we are not necessarily popular, but we perform many useful functions and deserve public recognition as core parts of any ethical, democratic process.

Sometimes the highest loyalty is to raise questions within an organisation or community and ensure it continues to flourish.

Eva Cox is an academic and feminist.

Propaganda wars a no-man's land for investigative reporters

Richard Ackland
Sydney Morning Herald, 31 January 2003, p. 13

WITH the dogs of war yowling you can be pretty confident that the first casualty is well and truly upon us. Truth has been going out the window in war coverage ever since these affairs began to be reported, and it's no different this time. So be prepared for plenty of misinformation and poorly sourced speculation.

Australian journalist Phillip Knightley wrote a famous book on the subject, *The First Casualty: A history of war correspondents and propaganda* (revised edition Prion 2000).

Knightley, who went to England in the 1950s, fled the London bureau of Ezra Norton's Mirror and "wriggled" his way on to *The Sunday Times*, where as an investigative reporter he played a central role in some of the greatest stories of the era — the double-dealing surrounding the drug thalidomide and its British distributor Distillers, the machinations of the Profumo sex scandal and lengthy interviews with Kim Philby in Moscow.

Twice he was named journalist of the year in the British Press Awards. His many books have been courageous and absorbing. If any journalist is worthy of an Australia Day gong, it should be someone of the calibre of Knightley.

He's now into his 70s, sharper than ever, and spends a couple of

months a year in Sydney. He is to deliver a lecture next month under the auspices of the Evatt Foundation and the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance with the morbid title, "The death of investigative journalism and who killed it?" The murderer will be unmasked by Knightley in his address on February 15.

There could be fewer more pressing questions at a time when the important function of journalism is being corralled, manipulated and bullied by powerful interests like never before. And that is apart from the craft's tendency to undermine itself by concentrating on the vapid.

Since there is such a happy climate of ready support for the "freedoms" and protections of the US, maybe we should gird ourselves for the infiltration into our way of life of some of that country's less attractive innovations. I am sure Knightley will refer in his address to the relatively recent invention of lawyer-led attack dogs which present quite a challenge to the nosy reporter.

For instance, if a reporter is researching some aspect of the activities of a large public corporation with a view to exposing an impropriety or a fraud on its customers or shareholders, then quite a few disincentives can unfold. The moment the corporation is approached for a response or gets wind that something unsavoury may emerge in the media, a team of lawyers and flack merchants is on the case. Indeed, media lawyers advertise these services in the US.

The message is: don't wait and then sue, just stop it dead before it's published. The CEO of the media company is urged by a mixture of charm and threats to order the journalist to desist. Members of the publisher's board are put in headlocks and arms are twisted. If that doesn't do the trick, then prominent advertisers are urged to withdraw support; the capital markets are prevailed upon to sell the media company's stock.

If at first these tactics are not sufficient to head off the investigation, lawyers start probing the private lives of the nosy reporters with a view to acquiring ammunition to undermine their credibility. Very few journalists lead unblemished lives so inevitably some sort of leverage will turn up.

Life can be made very awkward for publishers bent on investigating the truth. This is a reality for investigative reporters in the US today. Maybe that is one reason this branch of journalism has withered. Another explanation is that it is a time-consuming, labour-intensive and expensive way to fill up newspapers or TV programs, which can just as easily survive on a diet of gossip about the rich and famous or, dare I mention it, by columnists with rancid old opinions.

It emerged at a recent gathering of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists that the New Yorker magazine had told Seymour Hersh that it loved his investigation of one of the big US oil companies, but please don't rush to send us another one. Hersh was advised to disperse his assets so he could not personally be punished for his efforts.

It's not just the weight of big corporations with which these serious journalists have to contend. Governments, too, can be pretty brutal.

This newspaper recently reported the fate of the Indian investigative website, tehelka.com, which not only exposed many of the cricket-fixing scams, but also corruption within the Indian Defence Ministry. Within days of the defence minister being fingered, the journalists at tehelka.com and their financial backers were raided by the tax authorities. One financier was jailed without charge. The company faces a legal bill of more than $1 million and is financially ruined. It's only the rare bird which is prepared to pay that sort of price for the truth.

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Website pays price for Indian bribery exposé

Luke Harding in New Delhi
Guardian Weekly, 9 January 2003, p. 3

Tarun Tejpal is sitting amid the ruins of his office. There is not much left — a few dusty chairs, three computers and a forlorn air-conditioning unit. "We have sold virtually everything. I've even flogged the air-conditioner," he says dolefully.

Twenty months ago Tejpal, editor in chief of tehelka.com, an investigative website, was the most feted journalist in India. He had just broken one of the biggest stories in the country's history — an exposé of corruption at the highest levels of government.

His reporters, posing as arms salesmen, had bribed their way into the home of the defence minister, George Fernandes, and handed over £3,000 to one of the minister's colleagues. The journalists found many other people prepared to take money — senior army officers, bureaucrats, even the president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata party, who was filmed shovelling the cash into his desk.

The scandal was deeply embarrassing for the BJP prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Mr Vajpayee sacked Mr Fernandes and ordered a commission of inquiry. The scandal promoted a mood of national catharsis, and congratulations poured in from ordinary Indians tired of official corruption. Tehelka, which had only been launched in June 2000, was receiving 30 million hits a week. But the glory did not last.

"I had expected a battle. But we had not anticipated its scale," Tejpal said yesterday. "The propaganda war started the next day."

Nearly two years later, he has been forced to lay off all but four of his 120 staff. He has got deeply into debt, sold the office furniture and scrounged money from friends. "They drop by for dinner and leave a cheque behind."

The website, which once boasted sites on news, literature, sport and erotica, is "virtually defunct". George Fernandes, meanwhile, is again the defence minister.

The saga is a depressing example of how the Kafkaesque weight of government can be used to crush those who challenge its methods.

In the aftermath of the scandal, the Hindu nationalist-led government "unleashed" the inland revenue, the enforcement directorate and the intelligence bureau, India's answer to MI5, on Tehelka's office in suburban south Delhi.

They did not find anything. Frustrated, the officials started tearing apart the website's investors. Tehelka's financial backer, Shanker Sharma, was thrown in jail without charge.

Detectives also held Aniruddha Bahal, the reporter who carried out the

exposé, and a colleague, Kumar Badal. Badal is still in prison.

"It got to the stage that I used to count the number of booze bottles in my house to make sure there wasn't one more than the legal quota," Tejpal recalls.

The government commission set up to investigate Operation West-End, Tehelka's sting, meanwhile, started behaving very strangely. "The commission didn't cross-examine a single person found guilty of corruption. It was astonishing," said Tejpal. Instead, it spent its days rubbishing Tehelka's journalistic methods.

The official campaign of vilification against the website has attracted protests from a few of India's prominent liberal commentators, such as the veteran diplomat Kuldip Nayar and the respected columnist Tavleen Singh. Tehelka's literary supporters, who include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and VS Naipaul, have also expressed their outrage. But in general, India's civil society has reacted with awkwardness and embarrassment to the website's plight.

"I read all of Franz Kafka when I was 19 and 20, but I only understand him now," Tejpal wrote in a recent essay in the magazine Seminar. "He accurately intuited that all power is essentially implacable and malign."

The treatment of the website's investors has scared away anybody else from pumping money into Tehelka. The company owes £620,000. Mr Vajpayee's rightwing government has bounced back from the scandal and is expected to win the next general election in 2004. Last month, it won a landslide victory in elections in the riot-hit western state of Gujarat after campaigning on a virtually fascist anti-Muslim platform.

The murky world of arms dealing goes on. Tony Blair and his ministers are still trying to persuade the Indian government to buy 66 British-made Hawk jet trainers, but the billion-pound deal remains mysteriously stuck over the price.

Tehelka's exposé was not about "individuals", but about "systemic corruption", Tejpal insists. He admits that his sting operation would have gone down badly with any government, but says that the BJP's response was venomous. "The degree of pettiness has been extraordinary. They have a crude understanding of power and a lot of that stems from the fact they are in power for the first time. Our struggle is emblematic of a wider issue: can media organisations be killed off when they criticise governments?".

The gloomy answer appears to be yes. Last night Balbir Punj, a leading BJP member of parliament, claimed the government had nothing to do with the website's collapse. "Just because you do a story exposing the government doesn't mean the gods make you immortal," he said. "Many other [internet] portals have closed down. The boom is over."

Lives on the line in pursuit of corruption

Florence Chong
Australian, 6 February 2003, p. B12

EFFORTS to investigate corruption have cost the lives of an increasing number of journalists, Transparency International says in its recently released Global Corruption Report 2003.

The report says the media are playing a greater role in exposing corruption, but they continue to be compromised because some media organisations place financial considerations ahead of public interest and journalists are bribed with cash or free gifts.

The Berlin-based global corruption watchdog says journalists were killed in many countries, including Bangladesh, Colombia, the Philippines and Russia, for exposing corruption in 2001. The report says 15 of the 68 confirmed cases of murders of journalists in that year were related to their investigative work on issues of corruption.

Writing in the GCR, Bettina Peters of the European Journalism Centre in Maastricht, says 2002 saw fewer journalists killed in conflict zones, but powerful organisations continued to threaten journalists investigating corruption. Apart from direct physical threats against journalists, the media in many countries face legislation that prevents them from gaining access to and imparting information, writes Peters.

If the media are to combat corruption in the public and private sectors — and within the media world itself — they must be able to rely on access to information, the report says.

But since the events of September 11, there have been numerous new measures to block, reduce, or slow the flow of information — while increasing surveillance of access itself.

In Jordan, for instance, new amendments to the penal code subject journalists to prison terms for publishing material that "could break national unity, divide the population or damage the image and reputation of the state".

Peters says the US has begun withholding information deemed detrimental to "institutional, commercial and personal privacy interests".

She argues that by giving timely and accurate information on the affairs of government, business and special interests, the media can shape the climate of democratic debate and help maintain good governance.

Despite the international recognition of press freedom, journalists and media organisations throughout the world continue to face obstacles in reporting. Obstruction ranges from censorship to threats of draconian defamation and sedition laws.

In some cases, however, private media owners themselves can have a strong influence on whether corruption is covered, especially if they pursue greater profits rather than principles of free reporting or access to information. In the US, media organisations often lobby to promote their business interests. Both the Republicans and Democrats receive donations from the media.

Corruption also exists within the structure of media organisations and in how journalists carry out their reporting tasks, the report says. Corrupt practices in media range from "chequebook journalism" to publishing news tailored to suit advertising or commercial needs, it adds.

TI chairman Peter Eigen says corruption will continue to thrive without the vigilance of the media and civil society and the bravery of journalists and whistleblowers.

Articles and reports

The latest on Hoser

Those on Ray Hoser's email list will be up to date with his latest contributions. Others can check his website at http://www.smuggled.com/.

The new year emerging

Catherine Crout-Habel

The closing of the old and the emergence of the new always gives pause for reflection, particularly the thinking back on past experiences and planning for improvement. (otherwise known as a "New Year's Resolution").

The emergence of the Year 2003 caused me to be very specific in my reflections. In particular is my clear decision to do all I can to support South Australian police whistleblower Tony Douglas Grosser in his ongoing battle for justice and freedom and to work constructively with Jack King who has spent eight years of his life already on this huge task.

On reflection, it appears to me that members of Whistleblowers Australia fall into two major categories, firstly those who blew the whistle and secondly those who then chose to take up the cause of a specific whistleblower, determined to see it through to the end.

Much has been written about the intimidation, terrorising and death threats heaped upon whistleblowers. I've yet to see any true understanding of the trauma experienced by those who have chosen to advocate on behalf of a whistleblower.

The advocates of whistleblowers also experience:

- death threats
- intimidation
- victimisation
- surveillance
- monitoring of phone/email messages, etc.
- interference with "snail mail"
- charges with "contempt of court"
- sleeplessness and nightmares
- impaired functioning
- disordered thinking
- disrupted family life
- isolation

In my experience, there's also the ongoing knowledge that if you don't keep on doing it, to the best of your ability, then an innocent person is further at risk largely because of your intervention and offer of support.

Psychologists may name it "the rescuer syndrome" and discount it. I see it as being responsible for your actions/decisions and following through as best you can.

As I reflect on the year 2002, I ask all members of Whistleblowers Australia to do all they can to support the advocates of Australian whistleblowers, to try to understand the particular stressors they are experiencing and to extend the hand of friendship, good-will and understanding for the benefit of all.

South Australian police whistleblower: Tony Douglas Grosser

After being forced to represent himself in what can only be described as a "kangaroo court", Tony Douglas Grosser was again found guilty of attempting to murder a police officer and 5 counts of endangering life.

The re-trial ran for a record 10-11 months.

"It was one of the state's longest criminal trials and is estimated by authorities to have cost more than $3 million." (*The Advertiser*, 5 June 2002)

"The trial, before Justice Kevin Duggan heard that Grosser had shot STAR Group Senior Constable Derrick McManus at least six times with a high-powered semi-automatic rifle at Grosser's house in Nuriootpa on May 3, 1994. The five endangering life counts related to other police officers." (*The Advertiser*, 5 June 2002)

A 40 hour siege ensued with Tony Grosser holed up in the roof of his home whilst members of the South Australian Police poured massive amounts of gunfire and CS Gas (tear gas) into the area. Grosser gave evidence that he also initially shot massive amounts of projectiles out through the roof to warn off the aggressors who had not been identified to him as police officers. … but after he had again been shot in the head and knew it was the police outside he stopped firing.

"The officers had gone to the house to arrest Grosser after he failed to attend court to face fraud charges" (*The Advertiser*, 5 June 2002)

Within weeks of the jury handing down another guilty verdict, the South Australian Department of Public Prosecutions dropped the fraud charges. They could not be substantiated. Throughout his re-trial, Tony Grosser claimed that the fraud charges were "trumped up" and were the result of him reporting serious corruption at the highest levels of the South Australian Police Force.

In sentencing, Justice Duggan, on the recommendation of Paul Rofe QC (Director of Public Prosecutions in South Australia), handed down the original sentence (22 years and 18 years non-parole).

Tony Grosser is seeking "leave to appeal" both the sentence and the conviction. He will be seeking the court's approval to accept new evidence as well as a huge number of other "Grounds to Appeal the Conviction".

The Supreme Court of South Australia has been put on notice that if Grosser is unsuccessful in this jurisdiction, he will take the matter back to the High Court.

The High Court of Australia has already ruled that Grosser's "Special Leave to Appeal", which focussed on being forced to represent himself, was "premature". Justice Kirby advised that, after the Supreme Court of SA had ruled on his submissions, then, if Tony Douglas Grosser still felt that justice had not been served, he should bring it back to the High Court for their consideration.

Tony Douglas Grosser has no money and is forced to represent himself in all of these judicial matters but this still incurs a cost such as for photocopying, postage and binding of documents. His two "advocates" are also "cash poor".

You can contribute to Tony Douglas Grosser's defence by sending

a cheque or money order to Tony Douglas Grosser at 1 Peter Brown Drive, Northfield SA, 5085. Tony's words are, "The prison a/c system clear the cheques etc. for me and they are like a bank without charges to me."

Written and submitted by Catherine Crout-Habel on behalf of and with the approval of Tony Douglas Grosser.

The cult of the Brotherhood

Joseph Palmer

On 18 February 2003, SBS TV aired *The Brotherhood*, a documentary on the story of Lachlan McCulloch, an undercover policeman in the Victorian anti-drug squad. His story has parallels to Frank Serpico's case, a NYPD undercover cop featured in the 1973 film *Serpico*, and with Michael Drury's case featured in the *Blue Murder* mini-series on police corruption in NSW. The documentary was directed by Walkley award-winner Terry Carlyon, with McCulloch narrating his own story.

Lachlan McCulloch served 16 years in the Victorian Police, and during that time he won several bravery awards. He was unusually persistent and relentless in his pursuit of drug dealers. He successfully infiltrated several drug rings. In 1992 he found out that a drug ring he was investigating was getting inside information on his efforts to bust it. When he decided to investigate one of "his own" involved in this, the police brotherhood closed ranks against him. He was abused and ostracised by colleagues and received many death threats. His records storeroom in the secure drugs squad building was broken into and his records were trashed. It took seven years and a great deal of doggedness before drug baron Peter Pilarinos and detective sergeant Kevin Hicks and twelve others were charged. The pressure and stress were too much for McCulloch and he left the police service in 1999, before the guilty verdicts came down.

He describes making the documentary as "quite cathartic" and says that his ordeal had a profound impact on him. He states that the underlying rule for a lot of the old-school police is that you don't work on "your own". Kevin Hicks was a very likeable, long-serving and well-respected police officer. Many of his colleagues packed the courtroom during his trial to show support. He pleaded guilty without implicating other police who were also suspected of being involved in aiding drug dealers.

McCulloch recalls one day he was invited to the office of police chiefs, who patted him on the back and praised him for exposing corruption in the service. When he told another colleague of this, he was told: "What they are really trying to tell you is to shut the fuck up."

He doesn't believe the documentary attacks the force in a negative way. He believes it will do a lot of good for members of the police force and the public to know what happened and what it is like to stand up and be counted.

Carlyon seems to be aware that the film could create waves. "Some senior police would probably have preferred that it wasn't made. But if you look at it really carefully it's actually quite a positive film and some good may have already come out of that." he says, "It's an honest appraisal of a cop who tried to do right and who was surrounded by the dark side of the brotherhood. I think Lachlan's experience proved that for a bent cop to exist, many of his colleagues had to give tacit approval or at least be willing to look the other way."

The story has the classic elements of good versus evil, the pursuit of justice and intrigue, and is exceptional viewing.

Chopped out of the news

Brian Martin

Do you remember TWA Flight 800, the passenger jet that exploded off New York on 17 July 1996? I remember reading about it at time. Initially the cause of the disaster was unknown, but before long all official bodies agreed that the explosion was due to a mechanical failure.

Kristina Borjesson, a journalist for CBS television, was one of many journalists assigned to the story. She followed up some leads that caused her to doubt the official explanation. For example, there were numerous eyewitnesses who reported seeing a streak of light go towards the plane, followed by its explosion. Government officials claimed that there were no military craft anywhere near Flight 800, but Borjesson discovered that they were lying: there was solid evidence of military exercises nearby and of one ship leaving the scene at full speed.

Some insiders said that Flight 800 had been accidentally shot down by a missile and that the government was doing everything possible to cover this up. Borjesson didn't have the evidence to prove this but wanted to broadcast a story raising the issues. This is where she ran into a "buzzsaw" that chopped up dissent.

Several months after the disaster, network correspondent Pierre Salinger claimed that he had documents from French intelligence showing that a US Navy missile had accidentally hit Flight 800. Jim Kallstrom of the FBI called a press conference to rebut the Salinger's claim. At question time, Borjesson reports,

> A man raised his hand and asked what I thought was a pertinent — and impertinent — question. He wanted to know why the navy was involved in the recovery and investigation while a possible suspect. Kallstrom's response was immediate: 'Remove him!' he yelled. Two men leapt over to the questioner and grabbed him by the arms. There was a momentary chill in the air after the guy had been dragged out of the room. (pp. 110-111)

Borjesson continued to pursue the story, but CBS producers seemed just as hostile to the missile theory as the FBI. She ended up losing her job at CBS. She became cynical about journalism that relied on statements by officials.

> What I have to say to a reporter or correspondent who accepts at face value anything an 'official' source or a 'legitimate news guest' has to say about a sensitive issue or an explosive event like TWA 800 is simple: Don't do it. (p. 146)

Her encounter with high-level government deception and media censorship led Borjesson to seek out other US journalists with similar experiences and to edit a book titled *Into the Buzzsaw: Leading Journalists Expose the Myth of a Free Press* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002). Borjesson describes her experiences — and those of other contributors to the book — as "walking into the buzzsaw":

> The buzzsaw is a powerful system of censorship in this country [the US] that is revealed to those reporting on extremely sensitive stories, usually having to do with high-level government and/or corporate malfeasance. It often has a fatal effect on one's career. I don't want to mix metaphors here, but a journalist who has been through the buzzsaw is usually described as 'radioactive,' which is another word for unemployable. (p. 12)

The stories in this book are extraordinary. Gerard Colby wrote a book exposing the unsavoury side of the powerful Du Pont family industrial empire. It was published but the publisher undermined the impact of the book, a process called "privishing":

> The mechanism used is simple: cut off the book's life-support system by reducing the initial print run so that the book 'cannot price profitably according to any conceivable formula,' refuse to do reprints, drastically slash the book's advertising budget, and all but cancel the promotional tour. The publisher's purpose is to kill off a book that, for one reason or another, is considered 'troublesome' or potentially so. (pp. 15-16)

Colby's experiences with this process are astounding and certainly show that a publisher's desire for profit can be overridden by political factors.

Several of the contributors to *Into the Buzzsaw* deal with drug running by the CIA. There is a chapter by Gary Webb, the journalist for the *San Jose Mercury News* who broke the story, titled "Dark Alliance," about how the CIA supported drug-running by the "Contras," the armed force — terrorists, really — opposing the Nicaraguan government. The CIA was thus implicated in the dramatic increase in use of crack cocaine in US black communities. The pressure of the mainstream press against the story was so great that the editor of the *San Jose Mercury News* printed a retraction and Webb lost his job, though all the subsequent evidence he obtained only made the original story even stronger.

Webb says, "If we had met five years ago, you wouldn't have found a more staunch defender of the newspaper industry than me" (p. 295). For 17 years, he had no career repercussions from his investigations. After his experience with "Dark Alliance," he changed his view about the freedom of the press: "The truth was that, in all those years, I hadn't written anything important enough [to] suppress." (p. 297)

There is plenty here to challenge most readers, whatever their views. Monika Jensen-Stevenson argues that the US government was lying when it declared in 1973 that all US soldiers captured during the Vietnam war had been returned. She tells how Marine Robert Garwood was held prisoner for 14 years and escaped only to find that the Marine Corps then did everything possible to discredit him. According to Jensen-Stevenson, the US and Vietnamese governments have both covered up the truth about US prisoners held in Vietnam.

The contributors are mainly concerned about telling their own stories, but along the way they comment about the causes of media cover-ups and discouragement of investigative reporting. Some of the causes include journalists' dependence on official sources, concentration of media ownership, and cutbacks on news coverage as part of an increased profit orientation and reduced public service orientation. Many contributors feel that support for investigative journalism in the US has declined. One of the few optimistic notes is struck by Brant Houston, executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors, who says that he worries like the rest, but:

> Then I see the latest investigative story done at a small news organization, and I start realizing that investigative reporting is a light that will never be put out. There is a generation of journalists who won't stop asking why, and there will be another generation following them no matter what the legal ramifications or corporate controls. (p. 361)

I have long thought that journalists — especially investigative journalists — see more suppression of dissent than any other occupational group. They probe contentious issues where powerful people have a strong interest in keeping the lid on. Yet despite the amount of censorship within the media, there are few systematic accounts of it. *Into the Buzzsaw* is a rarity. It would be difficult for such a book to be published in Australia, because of defamation laws.

One lesson from *Into the Buzzsaw* is not to treat the news as if it tells the full story. It's hard to keep in mind that this applies to foreign policy, wars, terrorism, crime and business news — wherever powerful groups have something at stake.

Whistleblowers and journalists often are natural allies: whistleblowers provide information that is essential for journalists to expose unsavoury secrets, and journalists expose the story to a wider audience in an accessible fashion. As well, media reports on attacks on whistleblowers are one of the most effective supports a whistleblower can receive.

It is worth keeping in mind that journalists can be in the firing line too. Many of them have learned just how far they can push their editors and producers. They will not want to go to the wall for every worthwhile story. But sometimes they will, at the risk of walking into the buzzsaw.

Whistleblowers Australia contacts

New South Wales
"Caring & Sharing" meetings We listen to your story, provide feedback and possibly guidance for your next few steps. Held every Tuesday night 7:30 p.m., Presbyterian Church Hall, 7-A Campbell St., Balmain 2041.
General meetings held in the Church Hall on the first Sunday in the month commencing at 1:30 p.m. (or come at 12:30 p.m. for lunch and discussion). The July general meeting is the AGM.
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Wollongong: Brian Martin, 02 4221 3763.

Canberra contact: Peter Bennett, phone 02 6254 1850, fax 02 6254 3755, email customs_officers@iprimus.com.au

Queensland contacts: Feliks Perera, phone/fax 07 5448 8218. Also Whistleblowers Action Group contact: Greg McMahon, 07 3378 7232 (a/h).

South Australian contacts: Matilda Bawden, 08 8258 8744 (a/h); John Pezy, 08 8337 8912

Tasmanian contact: Isla MacGregor, islamacg@southcom.com

Victorian contacts: Anthony Quinn 03 9741 7044 or 0408 592 163; Christina Schwerin 03 5144 3007; Mervin Vogt, 03-9786 5308.

Western Australian contacts: Avon Lovell, 08 9242 3999 (b/h); John White, 08 9382 1919 (a/h).

Whistle
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Note from the editor

Thanks to Sharon Beder and Don Eldridge for sending items for the "Media watch" section and to Cynthia Kardell for proofreading.

Letter to the editor

I am writing concerning some curious comments made by Christina Schwerin in the last issue of *The Whistle* about the Victorian Whistleblower Group.

As Mark Twain said, "Rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

We never ceased meeting and inviting all those interested to join us on the first Sunday of each month from 2.00pm at the Unitarian Church, 110 Grey Street, East Melbourne.

We are very focussed, active and provide a caring and interesting format for all participants.

If you have trouble contacting us, may I suggest ringing Brian Coe on phone/fax (03) 9527 4086 or John Hogg on (03) 9360 9241.

John Hogg

Whistleblowers Australia membership

Membership of WBA involves an annual fee of $25, payable to Whistleblowers Australia, renewable each June. Membership includes an annual subscription to *The Whistle*, and members receive discounts to seminars, invitations to briefings/ discussion groups, plus input into policy and submissions.
If you want to subscribe to *The Whistle* but not join WBA, then the annual subscription fee is $25.

Send memberships and subscriptions to Feliks Perera, National Treasurer, 1/5 Wayne Ave, Marcoola Qld 4564. Phone/Fax 07 5448 8218.

The activities of Whistleblowers Australia depend entirely on voluntary work by members and supporters. We value your ideas, time, expertise and involvement.

Whistleblowers Australia is funded almost entirely from membership fees, donations and bequests.