

Investigative journalism... a service of trust



I sometimes wonder if networks that deliver programs such as *the fifth estate* and *W-Five* realize the extreme value of the community service they provide. The average person watching such shows knows consciously or sub-consciously that there are those who dedicate their professional resources to delve into truths that might otherwise remain hidden.

In an age where corporate sponsorship oftentimes dictates the content and public stance of politicians and, sadly, the media, it is always gratifying to know we average citizens have people fighting on our behalf.

I know I do not only speak for myself when describing how utterly powerless I feel when faced with the obtuse might of those who use corporate and personal clout to steamroller free-thinkers into obscure silence. As a former diplomat, I saw first-hand how facts were partially, conveniently or erroneously manipulated to present slanted deliverables to the public in serving the interests of the mighty.

Ask yourself how often a concerned inquiry has brought you a lame explanation, a prevarication or dismissal. How often have you been dismissed as a

conspiracy theorist? How often have you felt at such moments, faced with self-interested, inept, or corrupt bodies whose function is to serve the public, that all you can do is just suck it up?

Are you one of the many who finds it just too tiring or futile to think, discuss and take action when injustice prevails?

Timothy Findlay, in his book *The telling of lies*, explores our innate human desire to believe or trust in the good of our fellow man. Trusting in what is told to us unless the contrary is proved. This desire, especially when trusting those in authority, is an important factor in the happiness and contentment of human beings. It is what holds society together.

Findlay goes on to discuss how the betrayal of this trust will ultimately result in anger, rage and despair. That, in turn, ultimately brings about proportionate moves for change, reform or revolution. The latter, as we know, come at great cost!

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Suppressed voices lead to collective rage. So often we blithely condemn the growing phenomenon of road rage, air rage, etc., without considering that we are witnessing the accumulation of anger brought about by feelings of helplessness.

Think of organizations such as *Greenpeace* and *Amnesty International*, among others, that for decades we dismissed as groups of rabble-rousers, tree-huggers and bored ne'er-do-wells that should rather be doing a decent day's work. Many of these now enjoy mainstream recognition as valuable, if not trendy, societal assets.

While *YouTube*, countless blogs and other independent news/social networking outlets ensure the truth presents itself to the public, I do believe nothing can ever be as impactful as the mainstream media in delivering truths, however unpleasant, to the public. So much better a

professionally-balanced delivery than the enraged chatter and the spewing forth of biased venom that fires people up, but seldom leads to resolution.

Most of us have neither the time nor the inclination to go searching for the truth, but rely on the media of choice for an instant download. It is this tendency that allows mass exploitation or manipulation of the truth to succeed.

Investigative journalism relentlessly examines cause and effect. It requires lateral thinking to link the connection between the past, present and future, as well as diverse discordant and seemingly disconnected facts and occurrences. Any challenge to the status quo rebukes the money-driven, the timid and those who prefer the impossible illusion of certainty, trustingly surrendering action, and even thinking, to those who they perceive to be their betters.

Sensation seekers, the blindly obedi-

ent and the followers of the tired and tested schools of thought can never be classed as investigative journalists. We should be wary of believing those vacuous journalists who, often chosen for fame, looks or even notoriety, carelessly shape societal values and morality ... especially those of upcoming generations.

I salute those courageous networks and journalists who bravely risk personal harm, censure and even professional success, to follow unpopular stories. The freedom to freely articulate the truth and to encourage the public to think underpins the essence of good journalism, if not the very concept of democracy.

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