



“THE MEDIA HAVE TWO MAIN TASKS”

Edinburgh Conference

Bernard Margueritte, president of the International Communications Forum, addressed a one-day media conference organised by The Royal Society of Edinburgh on March 9. Its purpose was to consider whether there has been a break-down of trust where the media is concerned, and whether the standards and quality of journalism properly serve the public interest.

Other speakers were Professor Philip Schlesinger, head of the Media Research Institute at Stirling University, Lord Steel, ex-presiding officer, Scottish Parliament, Tony Stoller of Ofcom, and Alastair Campbell, ex-Downing Street Director of Communications. There were four panel discussions each com-

prising a mixture of journalists and politicians. The chairman was James Naughtie, presenter, BBC Radio 4.

Margueritte posed the question ‘Isn’t it time we asked what our mission is supposed to be?’ and submitted that the media have two main tasks: to give their audience everything they need to know, in order to understand what is happening and why it is happening so that they can make up their own minds. Secondly, to report on distant countries, their civilisations and cultures, problems, fears, and dreams, in such a way that all can move to mutual understanding.

He concluded that the media can and should play a prominent role in building a better world, but in order



Bernard Margueritte and his wife, Joanna, (right) with the Lord Provost of Aberdeen, John Reynolds, in his chambers. Finlay Moir and George Whyte are pictured left.

to do so 'we have to re-find our dignity and sense of mission. Yes, we in the media do have to change our visions and look in the same direction as the people of goodwill on this planet. At stake is our own credibility, as media people and as human beings, and at stake, ladies and gentlemen, is the future of our societies and our world.'

The chairman commented, 'You have lifted our thinking to a higher level.'

The invitation to Bernard to address The Royal Society of Edinburgh media conference came from Dr Magnus Linklater, a columnist for *The Times* of London and *Scotland on Sunday*, who is himself a member of the Society media committee. He also arranged a lunch for Bernard with the editor of *The Scotsman*, Mr Iain Martin. Bernard was accompanied on this visit by his wife, Joanna, a lecturer in architecture at Warsaw University.

Aberdeen

Bernard Margueritte was received in Aberdeen by the Lord Provost, Liberal Democrat, Mr John Reynolds; was invited to address media students at Robert Gordon University; visited the offices of the Aberdeen Journals and spent an hour with *Press & Journal* editor, Mr Derek Tucker. Margueritte also spoke at a public meeting organised by former city councillor, George Whyte, and the Aberdeen branch of the Christian Socialist Movement.

Finlay Moir

'CUT THE CLUTTER AND DELIVER THE BASICS'

David Brewer, one of the pioneers of BBC News Online, emphasised the critical role of strong, independent and sustainable news operations in emerging democracies, when he spoke at the Greencoat Forum on March 9.

Newspapers, TV, radio and news websites in emerging democracies could 'lead the way with crisp, clear editorial offerings that cut the clutter and deliver the basics to an audience hungry for impartial, balanced coverage,' he said. 'Many are forced to consider radical production solutions because of the political and economic positions they find themselves in. Might the large news organisations look on with envy at how much can be done with so little?'

Brewer emphasised the role that news websites could play in keeping small independent papers free from the threat of closure by hostile governments, because websites raised papers' international profiles and therefore made them 'hard to silence'. 'Independent media challenge the executive and promote transparency,' he said. Yet simple websites were cheap to run, requiring only one or two staff.

Brewer was one of four journalists who set up and launched BBC News Online in 1997 moving to the post of Managing Editor of CNN.com for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, in 2000.

Brewer left CNN to become a consultant, in order to 'help build independent and sustainable news operations' because, he said, 'I knew I could help them. I like building solutions and they needed support, guidance and expertise'.

He emphasised that sustainability was key for independent media. 'Sustainability is all about media businesses that stand on their own feet, not only editorially but also financially,' he said. His approach to editors is to pose the questions, 'What do you stand for?

What do you say that no one else is saying?' and then to help them to be more cost effective in achieving their goals.

Last summer, in Belgrade's 'Centre for Cultural Decontamination' for instance, 20 journalists from across the Balkans gathered for a two-day seminar Brewer conducted on how to build sustainable independent media in a region that had been starved of free speech for so long.

An Oasis for Freedom of Speech and Thought

During the Milosovic era, the centre – set up to 'transform the social atmosphere that has been contaminated by orchestrated nationalism, hatred, and destruction' had been an oasis for freedom of speech and

thought, where artists and writers had gathered to plan for a post-conflict future.

The seminar aimed to try to ensure that the events that followed the break-up of the former Yugoslavia would never happen again. Journalists from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and news agencies spanned the so-called 'ethnic divide'. All had witnessed events that make transition to normality difficult to cope with.

They emerged having found out how to create new products from existing workflows using fewer resources and reaching a wider audience.

Brewer, who also lectures in journalism at the University of Westminster, paid tribute to 'brave journalists in all countries'. He warned that there was a need, especially with websites that have a global reach, to be aware of cultural sensitivities. 'What is appropriate in the West may not be appropriate elsewhere on grounds of taste or decency or some other local issue,' he said. 'Only those who are sensitive to this will be in a position to offer meaningful help to those news operations as they attempt to become independent and sustainable.'

NB This is an edited version of a more detailed account by Michael Smith available on < www.uk.iofc.org>



David Brewer

EASTER VICTORY

*Now from old Winter's back is rent
Her garment grey of discontent.
Branches their gentle greens unfold,
Daisies their laps half fill with gold,
And rabbits tumble in the corn,
Birds tune the sky and lambs are born.*

*Seeds bursting from their winter sleep,
Run their appointed hour to keep.
They strive and thrust, they twist and
run,*

*To lift their hearts towards the sun.
Seeds in their silent, winter bed,
They lay as cold and still as dead;
Beneath the stiff, white sheets of frost,
Their bodies empty shells and lost,
Beneath the deep, soft quilt of snow
They waited, row on sleeping row.
And when the fingers of the thaw
Tapped gently at each hidden door,
They stirred, the seeds no man can
number;*

*Yet turned again to dark and slumber,
Till the first trumpets of the sun,
Tilted to heaven, afresh begun
Their song of spring. The seeds awoke,
Shook off their hard and heavy yoke
Of clay and stones. Then furrow-free,
Leapt to fulfil their destiny.*

*Lord of all life, of joy and pain,
Of seed and harvest, wind and rain,
We praise you with each heedless
breath*

*For Easter victory over death.
And You whose hand can hold the tides,*



*Whose everlasting power abides,
As nature to your passion yields,
And life from death strides through the
fields,*

*So rule and change the hearts of men
That spring may walk the world again.
Our hearts, like seeds, can burst their
sheath,*

*Leave cold and bitterness beneath –
Forgotten in its outworn lair
Leave fear and hatred and despair:*

*So sap and bounty start to flow,
With warmth and colour nations glow.
New manhood rises out of dearth
To harvest freedom on the earth.
New nationhood with us abide
And renaissance this Eastertide.*

Peter Howard

'THEY LIVED CLOSE TO CREATION'

'Lord, teach me to silence my own heart that I may listen to the gentle movement of the Holy Spirit within me and sense the depths which are of God.' This is known as the Frankfurt Prayer and dates from the sixteenth century.

I have been thinking about some of the natural rhythms of the world – night and day; the seasons; the seventh day of rest; the family; birth; growth; nurturing; letting go; growing old; slowing down – with less activity and more time to think.

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the early Celtic church. It grew from the Christianity brought to Ireland, and later to Scotland, in the 5th and 6th centuries by the Desert Fathers from North Africa. It took root and monasteries were founded which became great centres of worship and teaching. Members of the Celtic church were very conscious of the natural rhythms of life. They lived close to creation and to God through them.

Today so many of these rhythms are shattered. We live in a fragmented world where people need to seek this silence to restore the rhythm and the depths of God to their lives and to that of the society of which they are part.

I need to acknowledge where

these rhythms have been broken and the consequent imbalance that has created in me. My lack of family life when I was growing up made me determine that I would always be there for my own children. But has this deprived them of a chance to face danger and take risks?

I am puzzled by the fact that people who have suffered themselves often inflict pain on others. Some of the Highland Scots who were 'cleared' from their crofts to make way for sheep at the end of the 18th century, in turn 'cleared' the original peoples from their own lands in the new countries of Australia or Canada. I wonder if it is because we don't face up to our own pain.

Silencing one's heart means facing things as they really are. Some of us have learnt to be honest to a certain extent by looking at standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. But we need to go even deeper and look at the attitudes we have grown up with as the correct ways of thinking taught by our religion, society or family. Then perhaps we will discover more of the ways which are of God and we will find a way for 'religion', which so often divides the world, to fulfil its true purpose of drawing people closer to each other.

Hazel Hastings



You have made us think...

The IC Schools programme for the Spring term is entering its final week, when we will be in Birmingham. As has been the case in eight other parts of the country, we are hosted by friends in their homes. We would like to express our grateful thanks for such warm hospitality everywhere.

The 60 sessions in a wide variety of schools have differed greatly, but everywhere there has been a sense of searching when discussing the theme 'Vision and Values'. Comments from teachers have included:

'I have always thought that the best "weapon" in your message is the bringing of young people from other parts of the world to talk to our students and to challenge them

on some of their closed attitudes. In many cases they don't even realise they do hold prejudices or have issues in their own minds that need dealing with.'

'It was wonderful to see Tanja and Sandra, who were willing to share personal experiences. ... really made us think much more deeply about the "vision and values" of life.'

'Your role, I feel is like that of a gardener – you plant seeds in minds. Unfortunately for you, you don't always see the fruit of the planting – and the fruit doesn't always grow from where you might expect. I enclose a small token of appreciation from Trinity school, but harvesting the 'seeds' sown is clearly the best appreciation we can offer.

Tanja, Sandra and Howard

IN MARCH, MICHAEL HENDERSON was interviewed on a one-hour satellite programme on forgiveness made by the Seventh Day Adventist church. A recorded interview segment was also included with Stephen Broadbent talking about his sculpture 'Reconciliation.' The programme was in a new series entitled 'Evidence'. The Australian producer, Sally Salmond, had discovered *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chain of Hate* on Michael's website and came to Caux last summer.

The spring issue of *U3A News*, the national magazine of the University of the Third Age, reviewed *Forgiveness: Breaking the*

Chain of Hate under the headline 'Forgive your enemies' along with a photo of Nelson Mandela.

The April issue of *The Way*, a review of Christian spirituality published by the British Jesuits, carries a 5000 word essay by Michael Henderson on *Forgiveness – a Dilemma of Democracy*.

Last week he spoke to the Taunton branch of the English-Speaking Union. His participation was called 'heaven-sent', a reference, however, not to content but to the fact that he filled in at short notice when another speaker cancelled!

A reflection from Hugh Williams

How to Live in a Dangerous World

- Seek God's guidance about our movements. Is my journey really necessary, if it is take it fearlessly.
- Stay right with God (keep a clear conscience) as we never know which day may be our last.
- Pray often for family, friends and colleagues.
- Care for others.
- On this basis, live free of fear.
'Perfect love drives away fear'

1 John 4: 18

Dick Channer writes:

Jim Houck of Baltimore, USA spoke to me recently. He told how he had met Wally Paton of Tucson, Arizona, a lecturer and a leader of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Wally took Jim to talk at dozens of AA reunions. Wally then wrote a book about his experiences, *How to Listen to God*, which included writings by Frank Buchman and other Oxford Group sources. This was crystallised into a leaflet of the same title. In four years Wally and Jim gave out 300,000 leaflets – not scattered but handed to people who asked for them. The leaflet has gone to, among others, Baltimore portwork-

ers and to schools. *The Richmond Times Dispatch* carried articles on the response to Jim's talks in a Virginian prison.

Jim has recently celebrated his 98th birthday but he is now working with youth groups across the border in Mexico and has distributed 10,000 leaflets in Spanish.

Copies of the two-sided A4 leaflet are available from Dick Channer, 020 8788 1420 or from 24 Greencoat Place, 020 7798 6025 – or send a 9x6 SAE to Greencoat Place.

Kristeligt Dagblad, a Danish national newspaper carried a front page article on February 28 about former Foreign Minister Ole Bjorn Kraft and his involvement in the world outreach of MRA. The article also included references to reconciling work in Denmark and Germany and France and Germany and sited the peace-building work of Danes today in Eastern Europe and Africa.

Kirstin Channer

Bournemouth, March 3

'Highlights and Stepping Stones' was the title of a presentation given by Leone Beale to 100 people, including former mayors and councillors.

She told of fascinating journeys with MRA/IC and of people finding God's purpose for their lives. The occasion was enhanced by recorded songs of Muriel Smith, the American mezzo-soprano, who was a close friend.

Fiona Daukes



FUTURE EVENTS IN LONDON

24 GREENCOAT PLACE

GREENCOAT FORUM

Tuesday April 20 at 7.15 pm

International Farmers Dialogue (a programme of Initiatives of Change) will host an evening on:
'Farming as if everyone mattered'.
Refreshments will be served from 6.30 pm.

Saturday May 8 at 3.00pm

An illustrated talk by Stephen Broadbent, Sculptor Extraordinary, with projections of some of his recent large public works including the River of Life street memorial in Warrington, the Reconciliation Sculptures in Liverpool, Glasgow and Belfast and Empowerment, spanning the river Witham in Lincoln. All are welcome to this Friends of Westminster event.

Saturday 15th May 10.30 – 4.00

*People Making a Difference –
From the personal to the global.*

A day to focus on creating community. What part can each of us play?

Coffee, lunch and tea will be provided.
Invitation cards are available for you and your friends.

RSVP by 4th May.
Tel. 020 7798 6000 or
e-mail reception@london.iofc.org

ST SAVIOUR'S, WALTON PLACE

Intermission at St Saviour's and Westminster Productions Ltd present four showcase performances of *Rhubarb, Rhubarb*, a new comedy written and directed by Hugh Steadman Williams.

29 and 30 April at 7.30 and Saturday 1st May at 2.30 pm and 7.30 pm.

Tickets £10 (Students £6).

For reservations send cheque and stamped addressed envelope to Intermission at St Saviour's, Walton Place, London SW3 1SA.

This issue was edited by Ann Carpenter and Phoebe Gill, with layout by Blair Cummock. Please send material for the next issue by April 24 to Mary Jones, Oakley Cottage, Kirkcudbright, DG6 4AH.
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