
Editorial

LAST YEAR we launched this journal for the first time. It was a modest effort to get the first regional magazine dealing with Pacific media, mass communications and journalism issues based at a Pacific tertiary institution up and running. But the high level of interest in *Pacific Journalism Review* is heartening. A steady flow of subscriptions have come from regional news media organisations and libraries. We also already have a number of articles being contributed.

However, last year we promised the content would be more regional for this second issue. Once again it is heavily concentrated on Melanesia, particularly Papua New Guinea. We make no apologies for this. It is appropriate for this issue as a number of news media developments during 1995 focused attention on Papua New Guinea. In September, Madang hosted the South Pacific Forum — with the biggest ever international news media contingent — and later in the month the whole of Papua New Guinea celebrated its 20th anniversary of independence in colourful style.

Earlier, in late June, a regional media organisation held its annual convention in Port Moresby. During that time the Chan Government gagged Roger Hau'ofa's talkback show on Radio Kalang when three prominent Papua New Guineans, including former Chief Ombudsman Sir Charles Maino, were barred from discussing controversial legislation which abolished the provincial government system. The gag was condemned by the Paris-based Reporters sans Frontières and regional media groups as an infringement on the constitutional right to free speech and a free press.

Ironically, the gag came just two two days after the PNG Prime Minister told the media convention that news and debate should be seen 'as the lifeblood of democracy and freedom ... as the people's right to know'. And equally ironical, the gag was effectively imposed by a former editor of one of the Pacific's finest newspapers.

As the year drew to a close, speculation that the Government might impose some form of media controls in Papua New Guinea became a growing concern for media organisations and journalists. Commented the *Post-Courier*, by far the region's biggest daily newspaper: 'Moves by the Constitutional Review Commission to legislate against press freedom is the beginning of a move towards a dictatorship style of government for Papua New Guinea. If Parliament

DAVID ROBIE

goes ahead to restrict freedom of the media, it will destroy democracy in this country.' As the paper pointed out, PNG has enjoyed a relative media freedom which has allowed a free exchange of views and opinions on a wide range of issues. A healthy exchange that has made PNG the envy of many developing nations throughout the world. Added the *Post-Courier*: 'Parliament must stand up for the right to free speech and freedom of the media.'

So must the journalists. Lack of a professional organisation at present makes the PNG news media vulnerable to such curbs. One factor troubling the Government has been the sympathetic view of the landowners often given by the news media over resource development compensation disputes such as the Ok Tedi mine pollution and logging exploitation.

Media controls have again become an issue in the Cook Islands. Government bans on journalists, attacks on the media by Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Henry, obstacles making it difficult for foreign journalists to visit the country, threats over the residency status of journalists, and finally draconian legislation have been the name of the game for several months. More than 1000 Cook Islanders signed a petition opposing the draft bill. We hope journalists and the public in the Cooks and around the region vigorously defend their media freedom.

In future issues we expect to have more articles, and contributions for the Forum section, from the Eastern Pacific countries —and also some of the countries with large Pacific Islander populations. There are many media stories to be told. So how about it?

In this issue we include several papers from the Pacific Islands News Association convention, the first ever in PNG. Prime Minister **Sir Julius Chan** makes a plea to serve 'truth' with development and calls for greater professionalism among the ranks of media practitioners. Former Chief Ombudsman **Sir Charles Maino**, now a practising lawyer, observes that freedom of the press sometimes gets rough handling by authorities and governments around the world, but in the Pacific the right must be protected for the people. Foreign Affairs Secretary **Gabriel Dusava** argues that some 'mischievous' foreign news media present a caricature of PNG and other Pacific countries. Journalism lecturer and author **David Robie** defends the media, saying that image-massagers sprucing up Pacific government images aren't enough to prevent a 'bad press'. His colleague, **Sorariba Nash**, sums up a seminar debate on how well the mass media in the South Pacific has covered military, social and political conflicts in the region such as Bougainville. A Manila-based journalist, **Kunda Dixit**, gives a refreshing overview of the touch of paranoia displayed by some Pacific governments toward the news media.

In other articles, **Harlyne Joku**, gives a personal tribute to *The Times of*

Papua New Guinea which sadly closed in May. **Peter Cronau** discusses 'self-censorship — the most insidious gag'. **Walter Nalangu** reports on a new postgraduate investigative journalism course at the University of PNG. An edited script of the controversial **Helen Vatsikopoulos** SBS *Dateline* report on corruption in PNG follows. *Saturday Independent* columnist **James Pinder** pokes fun at the hypocrisy of Pacific politicians who take themselves so seriously at the media's expense while **David Robie** recounts the latest attacks on the press. Some of the problems of PNG's National Broadcasting Commission are analysed by **Ian Boden**. **Sorariba Nash** reports on a new international news flow research project. Professor **John Nonggorr** examines the copyright dilemma and **William Ferea** the death penalty issue for PNG. From Fiji, **Philip Cass** presents a devil's advocate case for why a free press could not work while **Kiery Manassah** reports on the pressures facing Vanuatu's state-run news media.

Concerning the resumption of French nuclear tests in the region in the face of unprecedented international opposition, **Ekonia Peni** gives a commentary about nuke protests at the South Pacific Forum in Madang and PNG's 20th independence celebrations. **David Robie** recalls the fate of photojournalist Fernando Pereira on board the bombed *Rainbow Warrior* a decade ago.

This edition also begins a regular series of profiles of leading journalists. Included this time are **Neville Togarewa**, special writer of the *Post-Courier*, *Saturday Independent* senior business reporter Abby Yadi and investigative journalist and academic Associate Professor **Wendy Bacon**, who exposed foreigners involved in the Fiji coups and who conducted workshops for investigative journalists in PNG in July.

One of the major objectives of *PJR* is to provide a forum for critical analysis of the news media in the Pacific today and to contribute to a climate of debate that will help improve professional and ethical goals for the future. As one senior newspaper executive mused: 'Unfortunately our journalists in the South Pacific are not yet real investigators. They handle the stories as one-off events and then leave the junior reporters to carry on with the follow-ups — if they remember!'

David Robie