

Media accountability and new technology

Mass media in the Asia-Pacific region need to reexamine their old habits, beliefs and practices and ask: are we meeting the demands of the changing times? Or are we still capable of accommodating these changes? If not, what do we need to do?



By **SORARIBA NASH**

MASS — *adj.* of or relating to large numbers of persons or things, large scale.¹ Mass communication — an ability to reach a large number of people through mass media. Similarly — *masses* is commonly referred to a great number of people. Media is a term that is referred to a medium of mass communication (*messages directed toward a group of people by a mass medium*).² Books, newspapers, radio and television are the traditionally identified medium in this category.

Mass Media, means of communication (e.g.: newspapers or broadcasting) to large numbers of people.³ Traditionally, press is referred to **print media** or newspapers/magazines and journals, while radio and TV are covered by **electronic media**; but in this discourse let us address both under **Mass media**.

Introduction

To talk about accountability of the media, one needs to understand what role the media plays. Media in this instance is referring to newspapers/newsletters/magazines, radio and television. The role of mass media anywhere in the world is seen through numerous perspectives, depending on what that particular medium, instrument or facility is established to achieve. Mass media is the key to understanding the world around us. A tool which is used to impart knowledge, and again that which allows feed-back. Similarly, the virility of mass media in

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**FREEDOM AT THE CROSSROADS
THE MEDIA AND THE CONSTITUTION**

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The terms of reference

'WHETHER changes need to be made to ensure that, while freedom of the press is maintained, owners, editors and journalists of all elements of the media are accountable and that persons aggrieved by media abuses have accessible redress.'

The Constitutional Review Commission's media subcommittee's terms of reference are to determine:

- Whether there are genuine constitutional problems arising from and in the course of the exercise of the freedom of media within PNG.
 - The range of appropriate constitutional, legal and other means that are available for resolving the problems.
 - The appropriate resources that will be required to implement any solutions the committee recommends.
 - The realistic time frame within which remedial actions may be taken.
 - The implications any such remedial actions may have on other provisions of the constitution.
 - Any such matter or matters which the committee may decide relevant under its respective terms of reference.
- In performing its function, the committee shall:
- Have regard to the original statement of the terms of reference as issued by the head of state.
 - Refer to the proceedings of the commission's seminar on 12-15 January 1996.
 - Consult relevant government authorities.
 - Consult widely among the Papua New Guinea community and relevant bodies, including PNG Law Reform Commission reports.
 - Have regard to relevant law, practice and experience overseas.
 - Submit a draft legislation or bill for the commission to consider.

The committee: Commissioners: 1. Prof John Waiko (chair); 2. Philemon Embel MP; 3. Leo Hannett; 4. John Paska; Non-commissioners: 5. Sir Paulias Matane (prominent statesman); 6. Neville Togarewa (working journalist); 7. John Taylor (Media Council, broadcast media); 8. Anna Solomon (Media Council, print media); 9. Charles Turi (private citizen); 10. John Napu (National Union of Students).

Deadline: June 1996.

any particular society represents that society's ability to accommodate or account for changes at will. In other words, mass media functions as an agent of informing, entertaining and educating the masses.⁴

Traditionally, the role of the media generally has been to inform, instruct, educate and entertain. It is not an understatement to affirm that media is also very powerful. Media inevitably has that influencing effect on the psychology of mankind. History has shown that media has reshaped societal mentalities and attitudes, rekindled ideas, stimulated philosophies and most of all, provided a forum for dialogue and discourses. Mass media also has that persuasive and influencing power, whether it be within social, economical or political context. Mass media provides that extra pulse or momentum in any society. Hence, it instills such elements as tastes, fashion, language change, and even the cultures of every society undergo a certain degree of revolution in one form or another.

Although Judith Lichtenberg cites one of the early perceptions of social science as (mass communications) that the 'early belief that the media are powerful was based less on scholarly research than on anecdotal observation and common sense'.⁵ However, in Papua New Guinea's situation, given the high percentage of illiteracy, mass media has had a very convincing effect on the mentality of our people in terms of cultivating understanding of the social, political and economic system we adopted.

Hence, the 'minimal effects thesis': the view that by themselves the media were virtually powerless to change minds, that it was rather the context of family, friends, colleagues, and co-workers that was primarily responsible for people's opinions and attitudes. This thesis however, has proven itself wrong over the years and the common sense view has prevailed, thus defying such a counter-theory of the social scientists since the 1930s.

The original view held that the media influence attitudes — what we like or dislike, favour or reject. But the contemporary version is more complex.⁶ First of all, it tends to emphasise cognition rather than affect. The media provide not only information but also the conceptual frameworks within which information and opinions are ordered — not just facts, but a world view.

Contemporary mass communications researchers also emphasise the 'agenda setting' function of the press. As Bernard Cohen puts it, the press 'may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.'⁷

To define 'accountability' and 'responsibility', one needs to look at the given terms of reference. In this case accountability may be referred to being *responsible* and being *answerable* at the same time. To recall Professor Yashit Ghai's analysis:



Jada Wilson in *The Independent*, 12 January 1996.

'Responsible' means that the press exercises the freedom of expression with due regard to the public interest as well as the legitimate interests of individuals and groups. It is generally recognised that the influence of the press is very large. It has the potential to undermine the national interest by unwise or reckless disclosures of information which threatens national security or public order or hinders the investigation or punishment of offences. Similarly it can seriously damage the economic, social or personal interests of private parties, and cause them grave embarrassment and personal anguish. 'Responsible' also implies (although not

exclusively so) that the freedom has to be exercised through self-restraint, out of the press's sense of its own power and influence and the harm that it can inflict on society and individuals.'

'Answerable' refers to systems of supervision over the freedom of the press, liability for breaches of obligations that may be placed upon it, and the redress for parties that may be injured by the actions of editors and journalists. There are no strict rules applied under these general definitions. Mass media in this paper also refers to films, television shows, radio, books, newspapers and magazines.

The region

The South Pacific Forum governments do acknowledge that a society benefits if there are good relationships between governments and the media'.¹⁰ Constitutions or conventions of all South Pacific Forum (SPF) member nations guarantee freedom of speech. This includes freedom of expression and publication, reasonable access to information and free movement throughout the country.

During one of its regional meetings a couple of years back, the forum designed a set of guidelines for the media to project a positive image. At the same time, the forum governments¹¹ noted that most journalists reporting on the region do so responsibly, but the 'activities of some,' periodically contribute to distrust and thereby unnecessary tension arises within government-media relations.

The role of news media in the region is seen as to:

1. Extend the range of information and ideas available to people in the region and beyond.
2. Assist the development of community values and a sense of national purpose and identity.
3. Assist in monitoring the accountability of public institutions (including government).
4. Operate profitably or within available resources.

These are generally observable guidelines or objectives which media organisations in the region are expected to observe and which the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) acknowledges.

The media organisations should:

- a) Report on and discuss important issues relevant to individual Societies and the region, about political, economic, social, educational, religious, and cultural.

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b) Reflect the needs and interests of various community groups and thereby encourage national and regional integration.

c) Help provide understanding of a nation's place in a changing world, both informing the nation and fostering understanding between cultures.

d) Reflect the constitutional requirements or conventions, guaranteeing freedom of speech, by maintaining editorial integrity and independence.

These are just self-regulatory guidelines, just like the professional code of ethics for journalists.

Media culture

Complaints about performance by the media and its personnel is universal. To the developing island nation states in the Pacific region, media culture is something new but the industry is fast becoming part of the developing societies. In 1987 the Papua New Guinea government attempted to legislate a Media Tribunal Act, a means to control the media industry. In November 1993, countries cited for directly controlling the broadcasting stations by *PINA Nius*¹² were: Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea's National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) has been under constant pressure about how it can handle the Bougainville coverage over the past several years. However, on 6 April 1994, Papua New Guinea barred the national broadcaster from covering the New Guinea Islands region leaders' summit on suspicion that the summit was discussing secession.

Pursuant to my powers under section 7(3) (a) of the Broadcasting Commission Act Chapter No 149, I am now directing you to refrain from broadcasting any matter arising out of, or in connection with, the New Guinea Islands leaders' summit held in Kimbe. Let me remind the Commission that whilst it is our duty to provide a balanced, objective and impartial broadcasting service, it is paramount that such services should reflect our drive for national unity and that we should take extreme care in broadcasting material that could inflame racial or sectional feelings.¹³

This was the first time since independence that a ban had been put on the NBC. *The Post Courier*, *The Saturday Independent* and *The National* have had their share of defamation writs, demands for apology, or out of court settlements. NBC (Radio Kalang included) and EM TV have also received their share of bans or complaints.

The general expectations among these societies (Pacific Island states including PNG) so far has been for the media to share and promote their philosophies, aspirations and the demands of their cultures, however diverse and backward some may seem. In this age of globalisation through information

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and telecommunications technology, the mass media is becoming well equipped so to speak — and in turn gaining momentum of being privileged and powerful. If the society demands that the media needs to be accountable, then it is a matter of answering the question — *who is watching the watchdog?*

Obviously the general public, the politicians and various newsmakers remain unconvinced that the media is capable of self-regulating. In order to win the public trust needed to secure the news media's functions in a democracy, the media can no longer resort to restating traditional catch cries about a free press or the need for accuracy or fairness.¹⁴

The media must be prepared to re-evaluate the substance of those catch cries and re-examine their own operations and the nature of the implicit contract they make with their audiences. And that is what I call being honest with themselves and others they serve.

They must be willing to revise and decide on the parameters of right conduct in a changing world and ask whether the existing mechanisms to ensure right conduct are genuinely effective or mere smoke screens. They need to pay much more visible attention to the ethics of their business.¹⁵

'They must open themselves willingly to more debate about the principles and application of media ethics and revise their entrenched positions when necessary' ¹⁶

History

Newspapers: The first commercial newspaper in either Papua or New Guinea was the *Papuan Times and Tropical Advertiser*, which began publishing on 28 January 1911.¹⁷ The *Times'* first owners were W. G. Baker, a Government Printer employee and C.R. Baldwin, a former Burns Philp schooner captain. Baker, the first editor, however, resigned to take up his new post as the Government Printer and sold his interest in August 1911.

The *Papuan Courier* was owned by a group of local shareholders. The first issue of *Papuan Courier* was published on 7 February 1917. In 1924, a Port Moresby accountant, E.A. James, was appointed its managing agent. By 1935, James was the sole owner of the paper. *The Papuan Courier* eventually became the *Post-Courier* of today. Another paper, a monthly, *The Papuan Villager*, was published by the Papuan Administration and edited by the Government anthropologist F.E. Williams. It published from February 1929 until the end of the Second World War. The paper was aimed at bridging the gap between the whites and the Papuans.

Not to be outdone, the territory of New Guinea had its own version of a commercial newspaper published in Rabaul. The *Rabaul Times* first appeared on 24 April 1925. The paper was edited by H. W. Hamilton. Hamilton had first

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gone to Rabaul with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force in 1915. He later served as the Government Printer until the administration closed the works. Hamilton died in 1927, but the paper continued to publish under Gordon Thomas as editor. Thomas was captured by the Japanese and was one of only four white men to survive the war as a prisoner in Rabaul.

A non-commercial predecessor to the *Rabaul Times* was the *Namalula Times*, printed by the Government Printer to mark the Christmas celebrations by the Australian troops on the Gazelle Peninsula in 1915. The demand for this edition resulted in the introduction of a monthly paper for the Australian troops called the *Rabaul Record*. The *Rabaul Record* was first published on 1 March 1916. The paper closed in 1918.

One of the most spectacular newspaper publishing stories in Papua New Guinea was the story of *Guinea Gold*, an army newspaper published for Australian troops during the Second World War.¹⁸ *Guinea Gold* is said to have run for 1320 consecutive days with its circulation reaching a peak of 64,000 — more than the current circulation of *Post-Courier*.

Radio: The history of public radio broadcasting in Papua New Guinea begins with the initiative of Major Charles Marr, the Australian Minister for Territories. He was knighted in 1934, becoming known as Sir Charles Marr. It was in 1934 that Marr made his first ever familiarisation tour of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

During this visit, he realised the importance of radio as a means of communication both for the natives and the administrators. Sir Charles was himself a distinguished wireless operator from World War One. He was a strong supporter of broadcasting from government level, and had strong connections with the Amalgamated Wireless (Australia) Ltd.

The Australian government at the time was a major shareholder in the Amalgamated Wireless Limited of Australia, the AWA. On 12-13 March 1934, as Minister, Sir Charles chaired a meeting of the Pacific Islands administrators. Among other things, the meeting discussed the need for making wireless broadcasting available to residents of Pacific Territories. The matter was treated as 'first class' importance.

First station: Following this decision, the possibility of using the Townsville station 4TO as a means of distributing entertainment and news to Pacific Islands residents was explored. The next step was unexpected, but it started a series of events that led to the beginning of broadcasting; not only in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, but also other South Pacific Islands.

It all started in 1934 when the Australian government tried to collect radio licence fees from listeners in Papua, because they believed that listeners in Papua could tune into Australian broadcasting stations in Queensland. After a

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bitter court battle, Amalgamated Wireless stepped in to save Sir Charles and the government from further embarrassment, by offering to install and operate a broadcasting station in Port Moresby.¹⁹

In fact the AWA had been around in the territory, but never before on full-scale broadcasting capacity. Because in March 1931, they updated their Papuan communications operation by opening up a high-speed telegraph center. By 1933, AWA was using pedal radio sets throughout some parts of the Territory. This transportable equipment actually dominated Papua New Guinea's domestic communications in the mid 1930s. The system was used effectively by government patrols, survey parties, mining camps, and the missionaries.

AWA established the first ever radio broadcasting station — not only in Port Moresby, the Territory of Papua and New Guinea — but also the first station in the South Pacific Islands.²⁰ The station was called 4PM, and began transmission on 25 October 1935. It was a medium-wave station operated on 100 watts, and located opposite Saint Mary's Cathedral in downtown Port Moresby. The station broadcast for two hours each day, from Monday to Saturday, and Sunday — rest day.

In 1943, General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific decided to set up a broadcasting station for his troops in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Australians on the other hand were reluctant to let Americans operate a radio broadcasting station in their territory. However, through an amicable arrangement, joint operation through staffing and program content ensued. The studio and Transmitter was built at Wonga (the present NBC HQ).

The army erected the building and things got underway in just 12 days. Eventually, the Armed Forces Broadcasting Station 9PA Port Moresby was officially opened by General Douglass MacArthur in February 1944.

After the war had ended and with civilian administration restored in 1946, talks began on broadcast coverage for the whole of Papua and New Guinea. This resulted in the installation of an STC 2 kilowatt short-wave transmitter.

This station commenced broadcast on February 12, 1948. This particular station was operated as VLT 7 on 7280 KHz from 1800 hours to 2200 hours, and 0600 hours to 0800 hours; when the frequency was changed to 9520 KHz — then it became VLT 9.

In 1966, the Broadcasting Coordinating Committee recommended a single broadcasting authority in the territory. The decisive step towards establishing the NBC was taken by the late Sir (then 'Reverend') Percy Chatterton in September 1970, when he moved in the House of Assembly; for the establishment of a National Broadcasting Commission to take over and extend the

facilities operated and administered by the ABC. Its sole purpose was to:

Promote a Territory-wide dissemination of entertainment and information, and to provide a forum for the expression of variety of views on the social, economic and political problems of Papua New Guinea.²¹

Prior to this move, there existed a Government Broadcasting Service, as a separate entity under the Department of Information and Extension Services. The idea was basically to merge the PNG Service of the ABC and the Government Broadcasting Service into the 'National Broadcasting Commission'. In 1972, the late Paulias Arek (MHA) became the Minister for Information. He was in fact the main force behind the creation of NBC. With preparatory work underway, a legislation to establish NBC was debated in the House of Assembly in 1973.

Papua New Guinea secured self-government on 1 December 1973. On the same day NBC came into being. The National Broadcasting Commission of Papua New Guinea (NBC) was established under Broadcasting Commission Act No. 78 of 1973.

Television. 'Television' means 'distant vision', but it is unlikely that the earliest inventors of TV had the vision or dream of how it could be seen around the world as it is today. The earliest forms of television were developed in 1875 and 1880 by inventors in the United States and France. However, it was not until the 1930s that electronic television was refined.

Colour television is much more complicated than black-and-white. During the 1950s and 60s, scientists in several separate countries launched their own systems for colour TV. There are three major colour TV systems in use today. The National Television Systems Committee (NTSC) in the US established a transmission standard, which is generally referred to as the NTSC system. The system is naturally used throughout the United States, the Central and South America, Japan, Guam, American Samoa, Tonga and many other countries.

Another system was developed by a German Telfunken Company. This system is commonly known as Phase Alteration Line (PAL), which was adopted by the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, including most Commonwealth countries. Papua New Guinea uses this PAL system.

The French, on the other hand, established a more complex Systeme Electronique Couleur Avec Memoire (SECAM). The system is used throughout France, the Muslim world, and the French overseas territories such as New Caledonia and Tahiti.²² A modified version of SECAM was adopted by the former Soviet Union and China.

According to James Sinclair, the question of TV for Papua New Guinea was



Tampering with the freedom of the media is dangerous

TODAY is the beginning of a seminar in Port Moresby which will look at media freedom and accountability, to determine whether changes need to be made to ensure that, while freedom of the press is maintained, owners, editors, and journalists of all elements of the media are accountable and that persons aggrieved by media abuses have accessible redress.

Is there a real justification for such a move? Can the people of this country be guaranteed that such a move will not deviate from its original intention? Any attempt to tamper with the freedom of the media must be viewed cautiously. Is this what the people want?

One must question whether the main players and initiators of this exercise are motivated more by personal experiences of alleged abuse by the media than the genuine concern for the majority of Papua New Guineans? The chairman of the Constitutional Review Commission, Ben Micah, was asked by this newspaper to list at three instances which justify such a move. He listed only two and both involved himself.

The PNG Media Council has said that regulating the media is not a substitute for good government. And one might add that nor was it complimentary for or a feature of a democratic nation. The Constitutional Review Commission and the Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, argue that the basic underlying principles of the freedom of the media as it stated in the national constitution, will be upheld. But what guarantee do we have? Indeed, the media must be held accountable but not by the government of the day. Irresponsible and unethical journalism must be condemned and those practising it punished — but also not by the government. There are already organisations such as the PNG Media Council as well as the courts which can make owners, editors and journalists accountable.

The need is not to restrict or regulate the media but to strengthen existing bodies, such as the Media Council. The arguably outdated law on defamation could also be modified to suit PNG. These could be ways to move forward rather than to come up with such a broad terms of reference which could mean anything.

□ Editorial in *The Independent* (PNG) on 12 January 1996.

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first considered officially as far back as 1965 (when PNG was a territory under the Australian administration), and had been the cause of a good deal of public and political discussion for years before that.²³

However, nothing was realised until after the country gained its independence in 1975. A television advisory committee was established and in October 1977, the committee published a detailed report on the social implications upon introduction of the medium. About this time, there were debates by those concerned with the information and communication industry, whether the country should have broadcast television.

Towards the late 1970s the government of Papua New Guinea appointed a committee to review the communications and information services in the country. This was when serious public debate over the introduction of TV began. The committee was chaired by a former senior public servant, the late Leo Morgan. Naturally the outcome was a document which became known as the Morgan Report. The report, among other recommendations to improve the existing information and communication system in PNG, was in favour of broadcast television for Papua New Guinea.

Eventually when the report was made public, there was a strong opposition generally to the introduction of broadcast television in Papua New Guinea. Churches said it would spoil the people of Papua New Guinea and the culture because of the 'filth' that would be shown on air. Politicians on the other hand argued among themselves — saying that the government of the day should spend the money on roads, bridges, health centers and schools, instead of a luxury which the majority of Papua New Guineans could not afford. Others simply said the timing was not right — meaning it was too early to introduce broadcast television in the country.

By 1980, Morgan was appointed chairman of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). Morgan began pushing for introduction of broadcast television to be controlled by NBC. On 9 December 1981, the National Executive Council (NEC) approved the introduction of broadcast television by the NBC. The NBC went into action immediately, placing an order for more than K500,000 worth of television broadcasting equipment in preparation for the launching of the pilot TV project in Port Moresby.

Some staff members of the national broadcaster were given the necessary training to launch a pilot project, a TV broadcast station for Port Moresby. The idea however, was short-lived when the new government interfered and stopped the launching. What the authorities failed to see at the time was that people were already watching imported video tapes and satellite television where foreign programs were being received.

In Port Moresby, a private company Media Niugini Ltd was using video

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facilities to show what it called 'market Television' to the public. The concept was being tested out at market places around Port Moresby. The company also had plans to expand its market TV to Lae, Goroka, Mount Hagen, Rabaul, Ok Tedi and Bougainville; although it never eventuated. However, people in various parts of Papua New Guinea who could afford TV sets or had easy access to satellite dishes and cable network connections were watching programs from overseas TV stations.

It must be noted here that the inquiry into broadcasting, including television, was instituted after the Post and Telecommunication Corporation Board had granted a licence to NTN Pty Limited. At the time the PTC Board was the only organisation able under the Radio Communications Act (Chapter 152) to grant television licences.

Public opinion shifted gradually in favour of television. Then again, whatever the views and arguments were, Papua New Guinea was part of the evolving South Pacific region under the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Corporation (SPEC) and its planned program of telecommunications technology. In December 1984, the PTC board granted a licence to NTN Pty Ltd — Niugini Television Network, a subsidiary of NBN Ltd (Newcastle Broadcasting Network of Australia) to broadcast in Port Moresby, Goroka, Lae, and Mount Hagen.

The PTC Board also granted a licence to Media Niugini in November 1985. This 'market place' company, with the backing from Kerry Packer's Australia-based Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL), also had plans to transmit to market places in Lae, Mount Hagen, Goroka, Rabaul, Ok Tedi and Bougainville.

The two companies had different ideas on how to provide TV/video services to Papua New Guineans. Media Niugini, initially was more interested in a small scale video relay operation, whereas NTN was set on establishing and operating a proper television station in Papua New Guinea. The latter was the first ever broadcast TV station in Papua New Guinea. NTN's plan was to introduce television to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the country's independence in September 1985. NTN began test transmissions immediately after getting the nod from the PTC board.

There was then a change of government. Sir Michael Somare was the Prime Minister when the groundwork for the television broadcasting were made but when Palas Wingti took office things began to change. The Wingti government at that time feared that it did not have the control mechanism under the existing Radio Communications Act to control the new TV stations.

Our cultures and languages are simply too precious for us to allow television to operate in Papua New Guinea without strict policy guide-

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lines. We ought to be wary of its likely impact upon our people, our nation.

Rather than allow foreign culture to come in and cover us like a blanket through television, we could use television to celebrate and strengthen our national culture. If television has any value it must be to redirect and educate our people towards national development objectives and the strengthening of regional and national culture.²⁴

The Information and Communications Minister at the time, Gabriel Ramoi, forced through two pieces of legislation in Parliament consecutively, the Radio Communications (Television) Regulation 1986 and the Television (Prohibition and Control) Act of August 19, 1986. The Television Control Act prohibited the operation of a television station prior to 31 January 1988, despite an agreement to telecast with the previous government and the eventual licencing by the PTC board.

The penalty for contravening the new law was set at K1 million. Section 3 (2) of the Act stated:

... it is no defence that the person holds a licence under any other Act or has entered into an agreement with the State, authorising the operation of a television station. In addition to conviction of a person for operating a television station contrary to this Act obliges the Court to order the forfeiture to the State of the television station.

The new law threatened to force the newly established NTN Pty Ltd to cease operations. The minister had simply intended to halt the operations of the company until controlling regulations were introduced into existing legislation. Such a hasty move by Ramoi proved very expensive and embarrassing for the government.

However, NTN challenged the Papua New Guinea government's new law, contending that it would lose business and that the new station would end up by closing down. This was followed by the biggest legal battle ever in PNG between a media organisation and the state. The case was the first of its kind, a lawsuit between the state and NTN (TV station). The new regulation was declared invalid by the National Court on 21 August 1986. This meant that the initial agreement with the previous government remained in force and NTN began broadcasting immediately.

The NTN saga actually foreshadowed PNG-registered Community Television Company's application for a television broadcast licence earlier in May, 1985. The company later changed its name to Media Niugini Pty Ltd, and it was under this name that the PTC board considered its application for a licence.

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The government was not ready for a second TV station — when the first one was not even up and running as it should. However, Media Niugini kept up the pressure for a broadcast licence to be granted. The company claimed at the time that it would spend K3.3 million by June 1989 to develop a broadcast television station with all necessary supporting facilities. Media Niugini had already secured some funds totaling almost K515,000 to start the project as soon as the licence was granted. On 19 November 1985, Media Niugini was granted its wish.

The granting of broadcast licence was a bad news for NTN. Immediately after the licencing, Media Niugini managing director Alun Beck announced that Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL) of Australia, a subsidiary of Kerry Packer's conglomerate, was chipping in to take up 50 per cent of the share in the new television station.

The story of television in Papua New Guinea is not one that is to be admired. There were legal and political implications and a lot of drawbacks marred by disagreements and sackings of certain employees and board members.

NTN went to court in a bid to stop its rival station, arguing that Media Niugini had obtained the broadcast licence by fraud or misrepresentation. However, the arguments were rejected. Media Niugini began telecasts towards the end of July 1987. However, West Australian based Bond Media Ltd inherited Media Niugini when Alan Bond bought out Kerry Packer's Channel 9 network.

Technology and media

Technology is revolutionising the media industry throughout the world. Traditionally, there is always a difference between the print and broadcast media or electronics media. When we refer to print media, we are dealing with printing presses, darkrooms, the smell of ink, lay-out/paste up stands, big bold headlines, noisy typewriters, nagging telephones with high pitch tones in a busy newsroom supervised by a short-tempered editor who behaves like a flying fox — because he works at nights and sleeps during the day just like the rest of his crew. And then the newspapers are circulated by dawn.

Those days are gone. Computers with word processing software have taken over from the noisy typewriters. Desktop publishing software has saved the day for those involved in cutting and pasting up manually. With such software, importing texts, spell-checking, page setup, column guides, headlining, change of fonts and type sizes and styles are done quite easily.

The computer revolution has changed journalism, either in electronic or print; the reporters out on the job can send their stories from wherever they are through the use of laptops plugged into the ordinary telephone lines direct to

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their newsrooms or editors. On the other hand, the electronic media has improved in quality transmission of pictures and voices, backed by hi-tech satellite facilities and the general improvement in the broadcasting and televising equipment.

A classic example is the live coverage of rugby league matches, Olympics games and other activities around the world by Channel Nine Network, ABC, CNN and others. Pictures and voices are transmitted via satellite. And the quality of these transmissions nowadays are of very high standard.

Radio correspondents filing stories from Australia, New Zealand, South-east Asia, the Caribbean and other continents are received very clearly via the satellite also.

The electronic media — so to speak, both radio and TV, have fared quite well. In other words they have always been far ahead in terms of delivery because of their electronic oriented transmission capacity. Their ability to deliver news and information as it occurs, or instantaneously, has given them a place in the society without question, as the medium with speed and timeliness in terms of providing emergency and disaster warnings.

But with the power of changing technology, the gap or differences between the print and electronic media is diminishing fast.

'Modern Journalists of today, send copy directly from their laptop through telephone lines and receives instantaneous computer messages from supervisors, colleagues and contacts back through those same lines', says Juan J. Walte, a journalist with *USA Today*.

We can nowadays use the computer to access wire service reports to keep in touch with breaking news. Walte says that journalists, when far away from telephones, 'routinely link their laptop computers to small, portable satellite dishes (antennae)' anywhere and transmit their reports directly to satellites, which then direct them downward to the newsrooms or editorial headquarters.

USA Today is a Washington-based national newspaper which uses short articles for easy reading, colourful graphics and satellite technology to print the newspaper in plants around the United States, as well as in Europe and Asia. I am referring to *USA Today* as our example in this paper because not many newspaper plants around the world have equalled the pace set by this particular paper in terms of applying the hi-tech information and communications technology to its advantage.

Walte further explains that the paper makes use of advanced telecommunications technology to distribute newspapers.

Once the electronic reports have been sent to its headquarters and edited, they are combined with graphics and photographs and then 'laid out' on a page by illustrators. After the layout has been approved, it is photographed and the

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negatives beamed up to orbiting satellites, and then beamed down to 32 printing plants throughout the United States — as well as one plant in Hong Kong, one in London and another in Lucerne.

As you can see from this example, the electronics revolution has completely changed the newspaper tradition. There is no doubt in my mind that what is happening in the US will spread world over and eventually to us in the Pacific.

Many well-established newspapers are using advanced technology to offer all types of information to subscribers. In fact, even our own journalism training newspaper, *Uni Tawur*, has an electronic edition available on the World Wide Web. (See page 98)

Richard Harwood, a columnist with the *Washington Post*, points out that the Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service distributes news and information to newspaper clients hours before publication! News unavailable to readers until the next morning are made available via computer links. He says the *Post* is establishing a 'digital link subsidiary providing an electronic newspaper research service for clients who can pay for what they choose.

Michael Conniff, another writer, reflects what would have been five years ago. Newspapers were increasingly becoming part of the 'garbage heap of history'.

Newspapers, are leaders in the electronic information revolution, providing consumers with 'audiotex' - recordings of news and information, such as stock market quotes, available to local phone users; 'videotex' - news that appears on home computer screens; faxes of articles to clients on demand; and even 'multimedia services' that can incorporate a visual element into the electronic message.²¹

This is similar to the way 'pay TV' operates. You switch into channels of services of your requirement or call up your need. For example, you can call up fashion or check on the prices before you even decide to go out and buy clothes; food — restaurants — menu; a show or concert; or your favourite movie.

The digital revolution

All aspects of media are being unified by electronic digital revolution. On the other hand, because of the nature of the shared technologies, the development of radio and television have been interlinked, especially in the public conception, as broadcasting. We often refer to radio, broadcast satellite and cable television under this heading.

Although production techniques in cinema are similar to those in television, the different relationship with its audience has separated it from television. In the minds of sociologists, this has always been the case, but such differences are

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fast vanishing in light of the massive technological revolution this century.

With the advancement and the speed of technological revolution — mass production or reproduction of movies on video tapes, CD-ROM, laser discs and interactive TV or pay TV — menus of individual services are being offered to subscribers.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to separate such entities or means of communication and information sharing and storage techniques and determine what each medium should offer as a role model because every aspect of mass media — backed by the hi-tech technology revolution is striving to offer the best to its audience.

The present technological explosion is leading mankind towards better telecommunications services and that means information available to mankind is immense. From the industrial revolution, mankind witnessed the electronic revolution, and now we come face to face with the revolutionisation of information technology. The rapid progress currently taking shape leaves no space for boundaries. For example, we have instant access to information when we need them through the use of electronic media applications.

The merging of telecommunication and computer technologies is at the forefront of our progress towards a global community. The digital era has enlarged the scope of telecommunication.

The Asia-Pacific region is going through the second decade of being a party to this dynamic evolution.²⁴ The telecommunications environment is constantly undergoing transformation. In addition to accelerating technology, the increasing globalisation of facilities and the expanded range of services, a wave of marketing and regulatory changes is taking place. This is changing the character of telecommunications administration and the management of mass media technology. The overall approach to the status of each medium or facilitator within our information-based global village is changing forever.

Such approaches backed by the changing technology and readily available facilities has direct bearing on the operations of the mass media. Some of the most advanced telecommunications infrastructure and services to date are provided within this region. Yet in other parts of the region, towns and villages — remain without basic telephone services as well as the postal services. This gap, however can be seen as being filled by the mass media. Papua New Guinea is a classic example of such nation.

Asia-Pacific is often cited as the fastest growing region in the world today. Observers have coined this next century to be the 'Pacific Century.'²⁵ In this regard, the mass media in these countries, including Papua New Guinea, need to re-examine their old habits, beliefs and practices and ask: are we meeting the demands of the changing times? Or are we still capable of accommodating

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these changes. If not, what do we need to do? What are the issues in question?

Notes:

¹ John R. Bittner, *Broadcasting: An Introduction*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980, p.9.

² *Ibid.*

³ Joyce M. Hawkins(ed); *The Oxford Reference Dictionary*, New York: Clarendon Press, 1986, pp 516.

⁴ Sorariba G. Nash, 'National Radio and Development' in David Robie (ed) *Mass Media in the Pacific*, Port Moresby: University of PNG Press, 1995, p. 37.

⁵ Judith Lichtenber (ed), 'The Power of the Press' in *Democracy and the Mass Media: A Collection of Essays*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸ Yash Ghai, 'Critical Analysis', paper presented at the January 1996 CRC seminar, Port Moresby.

⁹ South Pacific Forum, 'Roles and Responsibilities of News Media and Forum Governments', 1988 SP Forum communique, preamble, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *PINA News*, November 1993, p. 5.

¹² *PNG Post Courier*, April 7, 1994 - p. 3

¹³ John Hurst and White, Sally A., 'Introduction' in *Ethics and the Australian News Media*, Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd, 1994, p. xi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Don Woolford, *Blacks, Whites and the Awful Press*, 1974.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Ian K Mackay, *Broadcasting in Papua New Guinea*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976, p.15.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²³ J. Sinclair, *PTC — Uniting a Nation through the 1980s*, Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Press Pty Ltd, 1993, p. 30.

²⁴ Michael Conniff in P. Malamud, *New Technology Changing Journalism*, Washington: Sp File (USIS), Vol 2, Issue 21a, 1994, p 2.

²⁵ *Asia-Pacific Telecommunications*, 1984-85 issue, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

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