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Public inquiry as spectacle



by Chris Benedetti
PAAC President

When the Academy Awards - the Oscars - were unveiled in February, it was appropriate that the event was an entertaining spectacle. But when the homegrown Canadian show formally titled *The Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities*, with Mr. Justice John H. Gomery presiding, went the same route, it was anything but appropriate.

The above thought crept across my mind as the addictive U.S. movie awards show plodded along. The Academy Awards are all about recognizing art in the rendering of artifice. But Gomery is supposed to get at the truth in matters pertaining to spoiled public trust in this country - yet there he was at one point, seemingly giving interviews and making quips about an inquiry over which he is supposed to preside with judicial reserve.

There he was, offering the public observations that Chuck Guité was "a charming scamp" and that former PM and likely epicenter of the scandal, Jean Chrétien, was "small-town cheap" for

passing out golf balls with his name on them.

I don't know which was more discouraging - the knowledge that Gomery harboured such a cavalier opinion of the actions of Guité, a man involved with public accounts which have not been properly accounted for, or the mockery of what is suppose to be an impartial, unbiased hearing to seek out those who have undermined the public good. Jean Chrétien may indeed have revealed something somewhat unflattering by wanting to hand out monogrammed golf balls, but it does not behoove the Justice responsible for the inquiry to offload his opinions to the media (NB - always treat the media with respect).

But he did, and now the AdScam inquiry has degenerated to the level of a show, and will garner the less public respect as a result. Perhaps former Prime Minister Chrétien should indeed receive a golden statuette for his performance, deftly turning the golf ball issue around by reaching into his satchel on cue near the end of his testimony, and bringing out similar monogrammed balls handed out by U.S. Presidents. As Greg Weston later observed in the Toronto *Sun*, Chrétien succeeded in changing the issue from misspent or misappropriated public money to one of the appropriateness of monogrammed golf balls. The inquiry itself made that possible.

Gomery has since admitted it was an error to give media interviews. But however ill-advised his comments were, they were honest inasmuch as he was telling the truth about his opinions. The public may have much reason to doubt the honesty of some of the testimony at the inquiry, but nobody can now doubt that Mr. Justice Gomery does indeed think Chuck Guité no more than a charming scamp, or that he indeed thinks Chrétien is small-town cheap.

The feeling will persist that other opinions hindering judicial impartiality still reside below the surface however. Whether they do or not isn't the point. Appearance now rules at the Gomery inquiry, just as it did at the Academy Awards.

New members, new member services and events

At this time I would like to extent a heartfelt welcome to the newest members of the Public Affairs Association of Canada:

- Heather Bussey, Elections Ontario
- Chris Wright, Optimum Public Relations
- Rick Hall, Rick Hall PR
- Sara Rafuse, MEDEC
- Christopher McPherson, Ontario Hospital
- Marit Stiles, ACTRA
- Claudio De Rose, Post-Secondary Education Secretariat

I am also happy to report that, as of the end of February, over 80 per cent of PAAC members have renewed for 2005. As members of PAAC, we can all benefit from new upcoming services such as the Careers Page, and professional development/networking events such as the upcoming Conference, *The Art and Science of Public Affairs*, now scheduled for October 27, 2005. If you have not yet renewed, please contact Kim Brown at the PAAC office today to make sure you can continue to benefit from the many services and events that the Association offers.

Career Site Live

One of the new services I am excited to announce is the launch of our new CareerSite, which has now gone live. The site is dedicated to connecting the best public affairs jobs with public affairs

professionals, through a fast and easy to use web page located here at www.publicaffairs.ca. For job seekers researching opportunities, and employers seeking high quality candidates, it is the Public Affairs Association of Canada's goal to optimize the opportunity for the best employment fit. PAAC members are invited to take full advantage of this service, and as more of you step up, the list of CVs and potential employers will grow quickly. Check it out today!

I would also like to remind all members about our next upcoming events. The next one is about an issue in the news, as much of a hot button as health care: Education. That's why our next PAAC breakfast event, *Education That's Worth More*, is scheduled for March 22nd, featuring David Lindsay, President of the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

Then, on Wednesday, March 30, is our Queen's Park Reception (evening, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.), celebrating the resumed legislative session. Ministers, MPPs and their staff, and Ontario government communicators are all being invited. You should be there too, meeting and mingling with our government contacts.

Coming up on April 13th we will be hosting a breakfast event with Lorrie McKee, Executive Manager of Government and Corporate Affairs for the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. While Lorrie will be focusing on the key challenges of stakeholder management in the content of the Pickering Airport Project - from then, in the 1970s, to now, with renewed attention to construction of a second airport for Toronto - I'm sure she will share her insights into the ongoing changes to the domestic airline industry post-JetsGo.

I am also happy to report that, on April 20th, we will be hosting a special event with Dr. James Young, the newly appointed Special Advisor to the federal Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and former Ontario Commissioner of Emergency Management, in Ottawa at the National Press Club. Dr. Young will discuss his first hand account of the South Asian Tsunami disaster, and comment on the efforts of governments across the country to better prepare for and handle emergency situations.

Please visit the Events Page to download registration forms and additional details on these important events.

Next month I will provide more details on the development of the PAAC Code of Professional Standards and Good Conduct. For those of you who have provided input for this important process, thank you for your assistance and contributions. We are well on our way to announcing the Code in the coming weeks, and anticipate that it will go far in strengthening the integrity of the public affairs profession.

Of course, I am always receptive to your views, and encourage members to provide input that will help the Association grow and develop in the years to come.

Thank you for your continued interest in PAAC, and for your support. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience at cbenedetti@sussex-strategy.com.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Benedetti', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Spring professional development session in Toronto

At the end of this month, PAAC teams with the International Quality & Productivity Center (IQPC) Canada as a sponsor of *Internal Communications Canada 2005*, a national professional development event focusing on the fine art of internal communications, including employee communications, corporate communications, public relations, training and development, human resources and many similarly connected aspects of public affairs. The event takes place March 30 - April 1 at the Holiday Inn, 370 King St. West in Toronto. As mentioned in a February e-mail to members, PAAC members attending the session get a 10 per cent discount.

Benchmark your communications

The event focuses on ways for communications people to benchmark their internal communications practices and master the challenges they face, in the ongoing effort to demonstrate the vital importance of their function. After all, the success of an internal communications depends on senior management buy-in, and is a key tool to achieve internal branding.

The roster of presenters is a Who's Who of heavyweights: Speakers and presenters will be there from Petro-Canada, Rogers Communications, Canada Post, Hewlett-Packard and many others, as well as major executives in the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

Leaders in their field will talk about how to improve and enhance internal communications and dovetail them with corporate branding initiatives, which must also rely heavily on employee buy-in to make them work. Communicating corporate vision and goals to employees and linking these things to employee goals is all part of the picture. The three-day event, which includes a two-day conference and a day of post-conference workshops, covers a lot of related territory. It will be the premier event of its kind for anyone who works in corporate communications, particularly internal communications.

Visit our Events page for the brochure, or visit the IQPC site to register online. Or: Call 1-800-882-8684 to register.

Spring Professional Development sessions in Ottawa

This just in: Sometime PAAC E-News contributor Sean Moore writes from Ottawa that the Government Relations Leadership Institute is sponsoring a series of half-day professional development sessions dealing with various aspects of public advocacy - lobbying and GR. And well he should know: Sean, who is a Partner and Public Policy Advisor at Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP in Ottawa, is teaching in two of the sessions.

GRLI is a joint creation of the Canadian Society of Association Executives - National Capital Region and the Government Relations Institute of Canada. The first of the three sessions was

scheduled for March 3, dealing with the fundamentals of GR. But the next two are on April 7 and May 5, so there's still plenty of time to sign up for them.

The April session features Sean Moore on the topic, *How to Manage Your Government Relations* - or, to put it his way, how to get the biggest bang for your GR buck. He'll talk about how to manage GR resources, be they human, financial or political capital. And attending the session will be a capital idea for experienced managers and executives who already know the fundamentals and then some, but who can nevertheless benefit from Sean's knowledge of organizing and managing a lobbying effort that gets the job done. There'll be lots of tips, tools and techniques to carry away in your slim-line briefcase because Sean has more than 25 years' worth of notches in his gun as a GR strategist and consultant, and as advisor to some very heavy lifters among corporations, associations and public-interest organizations. That's in April.

Then, for the third session on May 5, Sean tag-teams it with David Zussman, Executive VP at Ekos Research Associates, to talk about Government Relations in the New Ottawa. *New Ottawa?* Hell, yes. After all, it's not really just a case of a new leader doing a do-se-do with the old one; same stuff / different day. Not these days. These are times of a razor-edge minority government, and quaking changes on the GR front. Issues of transparency, accountability and registration of lobbyists are now shaking the GR foundations even as the minority Liberals are assailed by things like the Gomery Commission, the ever-more-rancid fumes coming off the sponsorship scandal, and the knowledge that the journalistic vultures circling overhead are not content to wait; they want to kill something.

Moore and Zussman will tell what it all means. They'll talk about what has changed in Ottawa and what has not, including changes in the decision-making processes of Cabinet and in the legislative process, and what the new accountability rules mean to you. There will be cogent observations on the constantly-morphing nature of lobbying in Canada's loftiest town. Go to the GRIC web site to get details.

[The Book Man](#)

On the Take' - take two



by *Stewart Kiff*

A Secret Trial: Brian Mulroney, Stevie Cameron and the Public Trust

By William Kaplan, McGill-Queen's University Press, \$29.95

Author and lawyer William Kaplan's latest book will be welcome to Canadian political junkies, who

are bound to appreciate this expose of the soft underbelly of federal politics and big media during the reign of Brian Mulroney. It's a meticulously crafted tale of offshore money, judicial lassitude, and the parochial and self protecting nature of Canadian political reporters.

The genesis for this book goes back to 1994, when Ottawa reporter Stevie Cameron published *On the Take*, an investigation into the former Prime Minister. Her book became a great success, in part due to an already established public perception that the man once dubbed "Lyin' Brian" by the Toronto *Sun's* Claire Hoy left office with a reputation on par with that of street hustlers. But it was later revealed, and finally admitted in a letter from Cameron's lawyer, that she was actually a secret informant for the RCMP in their investigation into the \$1.8-billion "Airbus Affair." Mulroney decided this investigation had slandered him, sued, and won a \$2-million settlement.

Then in 1998, Kaplan wrote a critical report of this investigation in his bestseller, *Presumed Guilty: Brian Mulroney, the Airbus Affair and the Government of Canada*. In this book, Kaplan went to bat in favour of Mulroney, attacking Cameron's involvement and the work of the RCMP. But after its publication, he learned that lobbyist, businessman and deal-maker Karlheinz Schieber, who was a key player in the Airbus Affairs, met with Mulroney shortly after he left office, and in a series of furtive meetings in hotels apparently paid him \$300,000 - in cash - for undetermined reasons. Kaplan could not reconcile this astonishing fact with his previous work exonerating Mulroney. So now Kaplan is back with another look at what really happened.

Secret Trial: Brian Mulroney, Stevie Cameron and the Public Trust is a fascinating story about Mulroney, Cameron, and just how dysfunctional our justice system and fourth estate can be. In this second book, Kaplan tries hard to get to the truth of issues he now knows were not accurately portrayed in the first. For example, he documents how the *National Post* - which to this day continues to claim a moral leadership among the nation's daily newspapers - inexplicably spiked the story of the \$300,000 payment to Mulroney, even though its own reporter had thoroughly researched, verified and passed the article by lawyers for his editor. The *Globe and Mail* eventually ran this same story, but only after extensive re-research and re-verification, demonstrating how cautious major news organizations are with hard news that might annoy powerful people.

Worse still, Kaplan details how many in the journalistic community closed ranks around *On the Take* author Stevie Cameron, even after the news broke that she had been an RCMP informant for years and had misled both her peers and the public about it. In painstaking detail he catalogues her mendacity and the willingness of her prominent supporters to let her mislead them. The irony is that Kaplan's recent work, revealing the \$300,000 payment, gives more credibility to Cameron's earlier inferences of wrongdoing by Mulroney.

This is a good read. By returning to the issues in this new book, Kaplan shows a conscientious rigour in pursuit of the truth, lifting the veil on a revealing episode in Canadian politics - one which questions the fundamental ability of our justice system to actually deliver justice.

Recommended

Besides being an avid book reader, Stewart Kiff is a PAAC member and is the Toronto Vice-President of Solugik Public Affairs. He can be reached at stewart@solugik.com and welcomes recommendations for reviews.

Missile defense a miss

by David Silburt
PAAC Web Editor

We've followed the missile defense blowup in this space before, theorizing that Prime Minister Paul Martin might one day use the issue to put Jack Layton in motion in order to deliberately bring down his own minority Liberal government once it became strong enough in the opinion polls to win a majority. The argument seemed to make sense, but it turned out to be dead wrong because it was based on the ridiculous assumption that Martin was telling the truth when he said he would support the U.S. as a matter of principle.

Believing that turned out to be about as bright as Charlie Brown believing Lucy would keep her promise to hold that football. In fact, the evidence is - and always has been - that Liberals support, as a matter of principle, only the continued rule of Liberal governments. If you doubt that, check out the quivering blade sticking out of Dalton McGuinty's back after Martin's February budget.

What seems to have happened on the missile defense front is that when President George W. Bush started pushing for Canadian support on missile defense, Martin decided, to hell with it because it would cost him politically. He may have slapped Carolyn "Americans are Bastards" Parrish down, but that doesn't mean there aren't a whole bunch of Parrishites in his caucus ready to revolt on the issue.

Martin's decision to break his earlier commitment left the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci, scratching his head, wondering why we would not want to have people in the war room if some rogue nation one day lobs a missile over the pole. He implied that U.S. generals might decide if the thing was headed for Canada and Canada had opted out of missile defense, then let it fall.

But that's nonsense. Americans aren't that petty; in such a case they'd still fire their interceptors. Martin knows this. He also knows that a terrorist nation isn't going to fire a missile at, say, Toronto for the same reason it won't fire one at Tehran. So he must figure, why spend Canadian tax dollars on missile defense, when the Americans will still defend us if it comes to that? Any money he's willing to put into our decrepit military could go to other, more immediate needs. So his decision, while it represents yet another line of evidence that Liberals don't keep promises, makes political sense on that level. What does not make sense is Martin responding to Cellucci's statement, incredibly, by saying he still expects to be "consulted" about what to do should that missile ever come.

Prime Minister Martin seems to have a very poor understanding of missile defense. He seems to think he'll be sitting at his desk and the red telephone will ring, and the voice on the other end will say it's NORAD, a missile is on the way and we need to take a meeting. Reserve a conference room, head up there, have some coffee sent up in case it's an all-nighter. Get all the generals in a conference call, wake up the Minister of Defense, put some trajectory maps up on that screen and let's figure this thing out...

No. What would happen is: NORAD detects the incoming bird, tracks its trajectory, computers plot a firing solution and let the anti-missile rockets fly. If it's an all-American operation by Paul Martin's insistence, then Martin doesn't find out what happened until it's all over. Anyone who

thinks the Americans would let Canada take a hit out of spite is out to lunch. But what the opting-out decision might accomplish is to deprive the system of Canadian-based ground radars that could make it possible to knock out a missile before it was over our airspace. That's all the Americans wanted - that and a little moral support.

Perhaps the Americans won't need ground radars in Canada to make their fledgling defense system work. Perhaps they can make do with satellite tracking. But if they can't, then no Canadian ground stations means if an incoming nuclear missile is destroyed, the pieces could rain down on Canada instead of the Arctic Ocean.

It's also worth remembering that Canada's long participation in NORAD included the operation of Defense Early Warning stations on our turf for a very long time. The purpose of the DEW line, remember, was not defense. It was retaliation. During the Cold War there was never a chance of defending against Soviet missiles coming over the pole. The idea was to detect that a death sentence for hundreds of millions of citizens was on the way, in order to launch retaliation in time to assure a similar death sentence for hundreds of millions of Russians. The Canadian government did not flinch from this, since deterrence was the only option.

Deterrence works when the other side is rational. Today they're zealots, so you can't depend on deterrence. Therefore, the Americans decided to go ahead with a system which, while initially a very iffy proposition, will evolve over the next 20 years into something more effective. Canadian participation would have helped, but perhaps it can be done without us.

We should hope it can. Because if that unthinkable, irrational attack should one day be launched, a successful defense would make it unnecessary for the U.S. to retaliate. But if Paul Martin believes that a successful nuclear strike against North America by a hate-crazed rogue nation would not oblige the U.S. to hit back, he's wrong about that.

Dead wrong.

Editor's Note: I recently learned from a news report that many of the young soldiers serving in Iraq are single people who get little or no mail. To give them a lift, a former Military Policeman and some colleagues set up the web site, anysoldier.com. This link is for any reader who would like to take the time to send a letter of encouragement and moral support to a young person in harm's way.

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Have your say

We welcome member input, whether it's a letter to the editor, a story suggestion or a proposal for a guest column. Feel free to email your input or suggestions to us. All submissions for publication on this site are subject to approval by the Editorial Board.

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