



ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Welcome to Volume 4 of E-News in Jamaica specifically focused on Access to Information and Investigative Journalism. The Objective of this *e-newsletter* is to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas about Jamaica's Access to Information Act and to provide an opportunity to focus on specific issues, themes and news relating to the public's "Right to Know". We hope that through the distribution of this *e-newsletter*, we can raise awareness of the Access to Information Act in Jamaica and encourage persons to use this new right.

This *e-newsletter* is prepared in conjunction with Northern Caribbean University, Media Communications Department but it is hoped that other organisations and individuals will

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Over the years, those unhappy with my investigations have tried just about everything to discourage our work. They have issued subpoenas, stalked my hotel room, escorted me off military bases, threatened physical arrest, suggested I leave via a second-story window, made a death threat personally communicated by concerned state troopers who asked that we leave the area immediately (we didn't), hired public relations people to infiltrate my news conferences and pose as "reporters" to ask distracting questions, attempted to pressure the Center's donors, and even brought expensive, frivolous libel litigation that takes years and costs millions of dollars to defend.

Being despised and frozen out by those in power is an occupational hazard-indeed, a badge of honor-for investigative reporters everywhere. Certainly no one at the nonpartisan Center for Public Integrity harbors any illusions that he or she will ever be invited to dinner at the White House. This is hardly surprising given that the Center broke the Clinton White House "Lincoln Bedroom" fundraising scandal, first revealed that Enron was George W. Bush's top career patron and years later disclosed that Vice President Dick Cheney's former company, Halliburton, is by far the Bush administration's favourite contractor in Iraq. For these impertinent affronts to officialdom, the Center's reports have received 28 awards from respected journalism organizations since 1996.

Public apathy, though, is another matter. Take our 2003 Center report in which we posted and tallied up all of the major U.S. government contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan-a project which won the George Polk Award for online journalism. Center investigators found that nearly every one of the 10 largest contracts awarded for work in Iraq and Afghanistan went to companies employing former high-ranking government officials, and **all** 10 top contractors are established donors in American politics, contributing nearly \$11 million to national political parties, candidates, and political action committees since 1990. And on the eve of the Iraq war, at least nine of the 30 members of the Defense Policy Board, the government-appointed group that advises the Pentagon, had ties to companies that had won more than \$76 billion in defense contracts in 2001 and 2002.

The personal financial disclosure forms of those advisers are secret, and much about the entire contracting process is deliberately hidden, and therefore unknown to the public. For example, it took 20 researchers, writers, and editors at the Center for Public Integrity six months and 73 Freedom of Information Act requests, including successful litigation in federal court against the Army and State Department, to begin to discern who was getting the Iraq and Afghanistan contracts, and for how much. Why? What has happened to the principles of accessible information and transparency in the decision-making process in our democracy?

True, there is nothing illegal about such cozy, convenient confluences in the mercenary culture of Washington, D.C. But what does it say about the state of our democracy that, beyond some spot news coverage of the Center's findings around the world, there was almost no reaction or interest by Congressional oversight committees, which are controlled by Republicans loath to criticize the Bush administration? Of course, no official reaction means no second day story, no

assume-and expect-that government contracts are competitively bid, partly because White House, Pentagon and company officials have, year after year, emphasized what they want us to know and, like a circus magician, misdirected our attention away from what would expose them.

Despite the inhospitable landscape and the grim nature of the work-forensically excavating the cold corpus of unvarnished reality-most investigative reporters would probably grudgingly acknowledge that they are, to paraphrase John Kennedy, "idealists without illusions," with some modicum of hope that things can and should be better than they are.

Hope and perspective are essential, for there is much work to be done.

Survey on the use of the Access to Information Act and Investigative Journalism in Jamaica,

(Survey November 2004)

By Carole Excell and Monika Goforth, The Carter Center

Journalists in Jamaica are being challenged daily by the public to conduct investigative reporting on diverse issues including the economy, crime, corruption, environment, health and education. There are those that say that investigative reporting happens rarely in Jamaica while others speak to the media and its loss of objectivity, creativeness and imagination in sourcing information and presenting "the story behind the story". The Carter Center in association with Media Association of Jamaica, Management Systems International (Civil Society Project) and the Press Association of Jamaica held a workshop entitled "Creating a Culture of Investigative Journalism in Jamaica and the Use of Access to Information," in November 2004 to discuss some of these issues. The Objectives of the workshop included examining the state of Investigative Journalism in Jamaica and promoting awareness of, and the use of the Access to Information Act (ATI) by the Jamaican media. The Carter Center issued a survey to the participants (media owners, editors and journalists) to measure their knowledge of the Access to Information Act 2002, its use in investigative journalism and the important role the Act could play in Jamaica. The sample size was small with only twenty-seven of our fifty-one workshop participants responded to the questionnaire but the proportion of respondents to workshop participants is a large enough sample size to suggest the general impression that the workshop attendees had towards ATI and investigative journalism.

The results of the survey suggest that the representatives from the media were conflicted as to whether a culture for investigative journalism exists in Jamaica with a higher number of respondents strongly disagreeing to this suggestion. This despite the fact that almost 100% of the respondents stated that they had conducted some investigative reporting in the past. All but one of the respondents had heard of the Access to Information Act citing government services, the ATI Unit, workshops and the media as including information on the Act. 48% of the respondents were active in the passage of the Access to Information Act by participating in seminars, making comments through the Press Association Jamaica or covering the parliamentary debates. Furthermore, all the respondents held that Access to Information is important to their work, as it is critical for investigative journalism. These statistics suggest that there is a relative appreciation for the importance of the Act in the field of journalism, as over 90% of the participants acknowledged this fact. Nonetheless, only two of the twenty-seven media representatives had actually used the Access to Information Act, with the Act being in effect for almost a year. Media representatives cited a number of reasons including their unfamiliarity with the process, the fact that there was no need to use it in their work, and the amount of time taken to receive documents. This result may suggest that the media is still conducted news reporting on the basis of their sources, information publicly available or supplied through press releases. Support from media owners both in terms o

Jamaica is a process, which is critical if the media fraternity is to make full use of the Access to Information Act. This is a process that we hope has begun with the Carter Center's continued work with the media in Jamaica

Lessons learnt from workshop on “Creating a culture for Investigative Journalism and the use of Access to Information

Article from NCU-

Media's use of Access to Information Laws around the world

By Laura Neuman, Carter Center

The Access to Information Investigative Journalism Student Award

By NCU

Upcoming Events, Training and Awards for Investigative Journalism

Jamaican journalists who are interested in furthering their training on investigative journalism have a number of opportunities to broaden their knowledge base both from Degree and Masters Programs at International Universities or through training courses specifically offered on investigative journalism. There also a number of opportunities to highlight some of the work done in Jamaica by journalists through the submission of investigative pieces for international awards. The development and increase in support of Jamaican awards for Investigative Journalism from the private sector and civil society is also an encouraging development. The following is a brief list of some of the international awards, fellowships and training opportunities that are available and posted online.

Awards/Fellowships:



Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington D.C. **Costs:** Receive a monthly stipend for living expenses, health insurance and reimbursement for travel to and from Washington D.C. **Application Deadline:** April 1 – encouraged to submit materials earlier. **More Information:** visit www.ned.org/forum/fellowship_program.html or contact kristin@ned.org

The Gordon Fisher Fellowship

.This fellowship covers the stay of a Commonwealth newspaper journalist each year enabling the winner to spend a year at the University of Toronto doing postgraduate study in the field of journalism of their choosing. **Costs:** Living accommodations and travel are covered by the Fellowship. **Application Deadline:** February 18
More Information: visit http://www.cpu.org.uk/fellowsh_gf.html or contact cpu@org.uk

World Bank Institute Online Courses

The World Bank Institute offers online Investigative Journalism courses at the introductory and advanced levels. Investigative Journalism I is a course designed to assist younger reporters in developing the skills they need to operate as effective reporters in a democratic society and within a market economy. This course is built around a case study featuring bribery and corruption that has proven popular with hundreds of young journalists in developing countries. Investigative Journalism II aims to strengthen the capacity of the news media so they can play a critical role in holding governments and businesses to account. Focusing on mid-level reporters with the means to carry out and deliver well-researched and clearly written stories that expose wrongdoing, corruption and systemic malfunction in developing and transitional nations, the course identifies constraints to doing watchdog journalism, and provides a tool kit to reporters on how to do investigative projects.

More Information: contact skpundeh1@worldbank.org or visit www.worldbank.org

Upcoming Events:

Media:- Internal Training Workshops for the Media on the Access to Information Act continue in July with two completed in the month of June. Topics covered in the 2 hour training course include : The basics of the Access to Information Act for journalists, Tips for making requests and avoiding pitfalls, Access to Information and investigating special issues, challenging refusals and enforcing your right to information.

Press Conference: The Access to Information Stakeholders Committee is hosting a Press Conference to highlight July 5, 2005 when all Government Agencies, wholly owned Companies and Parish Councils are brought under the Access to Information Act. This is an important day as it will bring the Act into effect throughout Government and highlight the Government's continuing commitment to timely implementation of the Act.

Quote of the month on the Right to Know

E - NEWS Access to Information

views on this and whether you believe this would be beneficial to the work to create this.

If you do not want to receive this e-newsletter please e-mail Carole Excell at cartercenterja@mail.infochan.com or call her at 755-3641. Again, we apologize for any cross postings, and are currently working on a database of e-mails to avoid future duplications.

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