

UNESCO WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2010 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ADDRESS TO THE WORLD PRESS FREEDOM AWARD CEREMONY AND CLOSING CEREMONY

BY CONFERENCE CONVENOR & HEAD OF THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION PROFESSOR MICHAEL BROMLEY.

DATE OF DELIVERY: MONDAY 3 MAY.

For the first time to my knowledge this unique event, the World Press Freedom Day Conference, has been available in 'real time' around the world for free.

This access was not provided by a media conglomerate but by the students and staff of a journalism school; not by someone seeking market advantage but people who share the purpose of exposing, as it were, the event to global scrutiny.

And you, the participants, gave your intellectual property freely, too, for dissemination, examination and discussion. Of course it would be naïve to suggest that this is an un-problematical answer to the troubling issue of sustaining a free press. Intellectual capital, technical and critical capacity, basic material rights and much more stand in the way of a global free press.

But when we think of a free press in the twenty-first century, I believe we should now think of journalists and journalism. We should think of the content which Rupert Murdoch says is no longer king but 'emperor', not of the vessels that carry it, and certainly not of the diminishing number of corporate or neo-corporate entities driven by share values. If the mainstream media are in trouble, then they should not be permitted to bring journalism into strife, too.

That is not to say that journalism does not have its own problems: it does – and many of them are of its own making.

But a free press is not a press detached from government, and then put in the hands of the government's cronies. Or a corporate press which seeks accommodation with governments to protect its market interests.

A free press is a public good.

Education bears a heavy responsibility for promoting this and for facilitating the development of new generations of both journalists and users of journalism. We have to acknowledge and work with the collapsing distinction between journalists and their so-called audiences.

In that, I think we can take a lead from participatory communication. We are now in the era of participatory journalism, a participatory press.

That may be the best guarantee yet of a free press.

But we also need models of exemplary practice, of journalists doing honest journalism.

It has been an enormous pleasure and privilege to host World Press Freedom Day here at The University of Queensland.

Madam Director General, the University and the School of Journalism and Communication in the University, and the Australian National Commission hope that this will provide a platform for continued cooperation with UNESCO, particularly around the conference theme of *'The Right to Know'*.

That could be operationalised through the creation of a UNESCO Chair here at UQ in the area of *'The Right to Know'*.

Too many people have worked hard and long – and, I hope, smartly – on this Conference to name them all; however, I do thank all of them. And I particularly thank you, Madam Director General, for being here with us for the two days.

The real focus of World Press Freedom Day is, of course, the awarding of the prize. It is among the laureates that we can find the first of the exemplary practitioners who can provide inspiration for those who would carry the beacon of journalism into the future.

On behalf of the Convenors of the Conference, The University of Queensland School of Journalism and Communication and the Australian National Commission (for UNESCO), I offer my congratulations to you, Monica, not just on the receipt of this award but for a life-long achievement in journalism.

Thank you.