

This is embarrassing for advocates of a legal right to privacy. But let me go on with this theme of media responsibility. Even the media will agree they have a responsibility to get their facts right. To get around that problem, there is no need to raise the standards, only to publish fewer facts, even on the front page.

Take an example at random from the front page of *The Australian*. It purports to be a report on the standing of Saddam Hussein during the last moments of the Bush presidency. We are invited to pity George Bush because Saddam will survive him. I quote: "... despite having unleashed more whizz-bangs than any other post Vietnam United States president ..." The reference to whizz-bangs hardly passes for factual reporting. Next paragraph: "... the Iraqi evening news each night ends with songs of how Hussein's people worship the ground he walks on." How would the journalist know when he is in Washington? And has he not read the second stanza of 'God Save the Queen'? Third paragraph: "If the Iraqis hear enough songs about how much they love their lunatic leader, then they will eventually assume they do". That sentence says it all: a news report, in which Hussein is unremarkably described as a lunatic and in which a ludicrous proposition is asserted as fact.

Fifth paragraph: "We have accidentally abetted the lion-at-bay syndrome ..." What does the journalist mean, "We"? This is partisan, tendentious, pretentious, presumptuous, unsubstantiated, and non-factual. This passes for news reporting, by their Washington correspondent (no less), in what the Murdoch people are pleased to call their 'quality' paper.

That quality of journalism is fast becoming the norm. Journalists are, it seems, weary of their craft — not for them research, inquiry, checking and balancing. They all want to be stars. What we want from our journalists, accurate and comprehensive factual reporting, is devalued as if it were no more than a mechanical function. They are itching to give us the benefit of their opinions.

Commentary on current affairs is essential, because it provokes debate and exposes opinions that we may not have heard. However, it cannot replace the foundational material: the news before the views.

### The boundless freedom of the media?

The community has no opportunity to examine the processes of its print media. We have a Broadcasting Authority, as

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# World Review

## A survey of some recent international developments

In Japan a company was formed on 13 April 1993 to acquire two BS-4 satellites. The acquiring company was formed from a consortium of eight banks, five private broadcasters and Japan's Government broadcasters. The satellites will be launched in 1997 and 1998.

Intelsat held its annual global traffic meeting at Washington DC. between 3-10 May 1993. In all, 210 telecommunications carriers, covering most of the world's countries, were represented at the meeting. The meeting forecast the Asia-Pacific region would have the fastest growing demand for telecommunications services.

Germany's largest mobile telephone carrier, Mannesmann Mobilfunk, recently awarded a contract worth almost \$US500 million to Ericsson for the supply of mobile telephones and equipment. The contract represents Ericsson's largest order for supply to a mobile network. Mannesmann Mobilfunk expects to cover 90% of Germany's population by the end of 1993. Ericsson had previously been the largest supplier to the rapidly expanding German network.

The Philippines could have more mobile telephones than fixed telephones by as early as 1995, according to an International Telecommunications Union Study.

Thailand could follow suit by 1997, the study found. The study's projections are based on the present high penetration rates of mobile telephones in both countries, reflecting their strong economic performances.

Hong Kong is also experiencing rapid telecommunications growth, which is reflected in a recent recommendation that its seven digit telephone calling system be increased to eight digits. The move, if implemented, will expand capacity from 2.5 million telephones to some 50 million. However, even this change is forecast to last only 15 years, before capacity is again fully utilised.

Fiji's PTT has selected NEC Australia to supply it with customer telecommunications equipment. The contract is worth \$A10 million and will include technical training for PTT staff.

The European Radiocommunications Office recently completed its first detailed spectrum investigation regarding the harmonisation of Europe's use of the radiofrequency spectrum. However, some of the ERO's proposals for harmonisation are already the subject of debate between European States. If implemented they will unify spectrum usage and create a common market across Europe for radiocommunications equipment. Implementation would take place over a 15 year time frame. Currently, the proposals are subject to public consultation.

France Telecom is likely to be privatised, in line with a general trend for the privatisation of Government-owned telecommunications carriers. France Telecom represents one of France's major corporations, with some 150,000 employees. At present no timetable has been set for the privatisation, which would require the enactment of legislation. However, it is envisaged that privatisation would occur in late 1994. In 1991 France Telecom was changed from a Government Department to a State-owned enterprise.