

Editorial

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The first independent newspaper providing indepth news coverage for St Helenians all around the world. Available FREE online. in association with Saint FM 93.1 - The Heartbeat of St. Helena

For the editorial this week I stole, I admit, an article from Juanita Brock on the Falklands. I have not asked for her consent but I promise to give her a ring later today. The editorial from Juanita is too good to be left outside this page. I am sure she does not mind us borrowing it. If she does not approve, she might send the Police again.

What happened on Wednesday, when I was arrested, was maybe the best thing that ever happened in St Helena. People got a real eye-opener how this Island is run. Freedom of the press is

suppressed. Freedom of Information does not exist but still the government is talking about openness and transparency. If you would publish something which they consider as sensitive, you get either bullied, abused or as it has been proven, arrested. This Island has to change immediately. It is not what it appears to be. Within people there is anger, fury and resentment to the current system. There is a new election coming up in a few weeks time. The old Council did not do a bad job but it has to be realised that the elected members in

St Helena are only there to rubberstamp decisions made by others. It is time for a change, not necessarily only of faces in the council, which would make very little difference in itself, but a change of senior administration. This Island is deteriorating fast. Even in the Castle resentment against the current powers can be noticed. After trying to clamp down on free media, what else will they be up to? The world thought they got rid of Gestapo and Stasi methods. Unfortunately the world only exported them to St Helena. Enough is enough. It is time to take the gloves off.

Mike

Apparent Leaked Document Leads to Arrest of St Helena Man

October 8, 2009

by J. Brock (SARTMA)

In a justified operation the St Helena Police have done what is comparable to going after a fly with a 0.22 rifle. Instead of obliterating the fly they managed to wound press freedom on St Helena - a small Island in the South Atlantic Ocean.

In an article which began "Yesterday, a release of a copy of the Accounts for Solomon and Company was made available to Saint FM. They disclosed that turnover for Solomon's and Company, including subsidiaries, was almost...." Mr Mike Olsson of the St Helena Independent exposed the fact that he was in possession of information which belonged to Solomon's prior to its being made available to the public. For this breach of confidentiality Mr Olsson was arrested and the offices of Saint-FM raided by St Helena Police.

In larger societies the practice is called "leaking information to the media" but on St Helena it mounts to theft of information that was commercial in confidence at the time it was published. It is the smallness of the society that makes this blow to press freedom so devastating. For this reason in other remote territories in the South Atlantic such breaches of confidentiality are dealt with in a more subtle way. Subtle, yes but it hits target without shrapnel wounds for press freedom. I would have expected Solomon's to call me - undoubtedly irately - to request an apology and/or an explanation to be published in the next issue. If this doesn't work, the advertising can be withdrawn - and in a small place it is on target and can hit like a ton of bricks. In extreme circumstances raid and arrest should be the last meas-

ure - not the first.

I have often said that along with press freedom there is an element of press responsibility. My question to the entity presenting the information is "Why are you giving me this?" There are times when sensitive information is obtained that it is done so to get the newspaper into trouble. Other times it is a genuine attempt to set an important matter right. In a small place the newspaper person usually knows the individual and can with ease discern motives.

But add deadlines and distractions to the formula and get disaster. With all the best intentions in the world mistakes filter through and judgement can be marred. It's easily done but is no excuse when it happens. The damage is done now. Saint-FM can quite rightly say what authorities did was a blow to press freedom. But what is unclear at the moment is the underlying factor that caused an unfortunate choice of weapon by those authorities.

SARTMA does not condone the publication of what we know as commercial in confidence information, though we know it can, without motivation or design, appear in print.

It is my hope that this arrest is a one-off and will not become common practice when this sort of thing happens - and it will happen - in the future. Yes, according to law it was right for a police investigation and an arrest. Legally I would imagine there are different ways to deal with the same situation. The right thing can be done in the wrong way and it is my feeling that in this instance, this is the case.

A fly swatter is fit for purpose and just as effective.

Your Opinion Counts

Dear Tammy,

It was extremely gratifying listening to your "Local News" programme this afternoon at 4.15, especially the coverage of Mr. Olsson's ordeal yesterday. It was the first time I had heard what was behind this blatant and unlawful arrest and wish to congratulate you on your excellent and unbiased presentation of the facts on Saint FM. I was ever so pleased to learn that Mr. Olsson received fantastic and overwhelming support from listeners far and wide and from many supporters

on Island, including all the loyal and dedicated staff at Association Hall. .

I have the highest regard and admiration for Mr. Olsson who has proved time and time again to be a champion of the of the Saints and one who has always shown the courage to stand up and be counted. What an outstanding Governor he would make?

Please convey my best wishes to Mr. Olsson and I send you and the entire staff at Saint FM and St. Helena Independent my thanks and congratulations for the marvellous job all of you continue to do.

Sincerely, Brian Joshua, Sapperway