

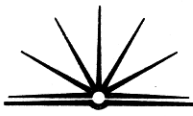


Section III Q 11.

"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past." (Orwell)

Truth in society today, whether we choose to believe it or not, dangles from strings. Strings which are firmly + possessively gripped by the anonymous forces of propaganda + censorship, by the very leaders we trust (occasionally), + by the forces which control them. It is these forces that have shaped my understanding of the ~~events~~ representations of events, personalities or situations, or rather, the manipulation of the truth surrounding them.

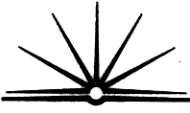
What right do authority have to devoid us of the truth, + are we complicit in the process? When discovered, these anonymous forces ~~the~~ claim that such manipulation is for the good of society. They create a secure, coherent community. But as



Albert Camus suggested, "the welfare of humanity is always the alibi of tyrants." So what is the issue with truth, + why is it kept regulated by invisible strings?

Rob Sitch et. al. explore the issue in the biting satirical series called 'Frontline'. Through wit + parody, the team undermine the credibility of the media, especially the medium of television. The scary thing is that they are not far from the "truth".

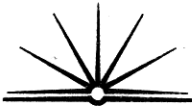
In the episode "Smaller Fish to Fry", the influence of authority, + the influence of the "big fish" is questioned, + the hierarchy of influence is established. Mike's naive enthusiasm is revealed when he suggests to Brooke, "you can nail him" [the P.M], while she is well aware the interview will be a "puff piece". This use of colloquial



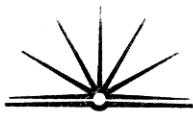
terms juxtaposes to the glossy televised image + language, suggesting the final product is contrived rather than true.

The team tirelessly pursue the "small fish" such as drycleaners + fridge repairmen, + are scrutinised by Stuart Littlemore of "Media Watch" fame, "do you ever wonder why the current affairs programmes go after the big fish? I know I do." This reference to a known credible critic reminds the viewer this issue is real + prevalent in contemporary society.

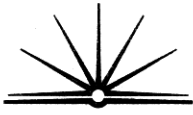
Journalists are human, I am well aware of that, + they like to achieve + succeed as do we all, a fact ~~reg~~ recognised so eloquently by Brooke, "you don't get ahead by pissing people off". This suggests that the truth is often manipulated to save not only the image of the person in



question, but the messenger as well. (and I'm sure Laurie Oaks could verify that). When Mike tries to pursue a story on the "big fish", a series of "coincidences" occur to prevent the production of the story. The Banks, the "big fish" in question, influence the Managing Director of the channel, who in turn controls ~~the~~ Farmer, the Managing Director of 'Frontline', who controls Brian, who controls Mike. This hierarchy of authority is represented through a succession of interviews ~~the~~ between the parties. Thus, the truth is filtered through the hierarchy of authority to protect those with power, + the indefensible "small fish" are attacked to ~~give the~~ ^{promote a} vision of seriousness + credibility to the ~~viewer~~ audience.

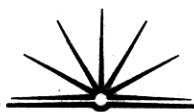


Manipulation of the truth for hidden (or obvious) agendas abounds throughout history: WWI, Vietnam, Iraq, the Bulldogs accounts. The medium of television is especially pervasive, + thus a potent tool in the new digital age, "the new politics is concerned only with images" (McLuhan). The recent controversy surrounding the children overboard scandal emphasises what E.H Carr believes, that "truth is linked with systems of power which produce + sustain it." The Australian article, "Out of the blue, a big whopper" reveals an intentional subversion of truth for political gains. Written by Greg Sheridan, it clearly shows the thread of the story, going from "threaten to throw a child overboard" to "children thrown overboard, to the admittance that "it would appear they were not thrown in."

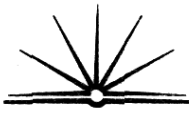


The emotion of the story converted from disaster to public relations victory for the Federal Liberal party, who subsequently won on a landslide at the succeeding election. Thus the manipulation of truth was used to maintain power.

Although we like to take the back seat & place the blame anywhere but at our own feet, the public & the audience contribute to the manipulation of truth. Chris Masters, former ABC 'Four Corners' correspondent ~~suggests~~, in his newly published book 'Not For Publication' suggests that "the media & the public co-operate in a climate of mutual disappointment" complaints of banality, sensationalising & manipulation are often hurled at journalists, but as Masters suggests, it's all about money "the essential objective is profit, rather than saving the world."



T.S. Elliot once stated that "those who try to give the public what they want start by underestimating the public taste (and) end by debauching it." This is achieved in the 'Frontline' series "We Ain't Got Dames" (WAGD). The team attempt to regain their female audience by presenting stories that would appeal to the group. Mike is made to look more feminine, "warm + fuzzy", a SNAG, and gets the girls in the office "head over heels". Sexist attitudes are prevalent, especially from the male authority (Brian). When Mike suggests his "sweatshop story" Brian says it is "too heavy" + needs "major operation" to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Women are stereotypically simplified and made a ~~false~~ commodity of a false truth. Sexism permeate the series in "Add sex + stir" Brian's double standards are



emphasised in his willingness to scandalise women's sport, but protect a national test cricketer, "it could ruin his career." Thus, the ultimate objective is money, ratings + power in a competitive world, as events, personalities + situations are manipulated.

~~Truth~~ The strings behind truth are twisted, knotted + complex. The manipulation of truth is often justified by those in power as protection of society, but more often than not is to protect themselves. So, when you scan your TV guide this evening, ask yourself, "what is this show + what is it trying to say?" Consider + scrutinise the truth that is constructed for your eyes, + ears, because otherwise you are just another puppet being pulled by invisible strings.