

The Elephant in Canada's Press Room



by [G. Tod Slone](#) (March 2022)

The following counter op-ed (letter to the editor) was initially sent to *The Telegram*, Newfoundland's daily newspaper, which chose NOT to publish it. The essay questions and challenges Saltwire Network "Outside Opinions Editor" Pamela Frampton's "['Enemies of the people' – the media under ire](#)." Saltwire is the corporate entity that owns and controls 23 daily and weekly newspapers in Atlantic Canada, including *The Telegram*.

Frampton, in her op-ed, does not mention why so many people distrust journalists today. In the US, where I live, trust in the media is at an [all-time low](#). Clearly, in Canada, the negative reactions of trucker protesters regarding the media, as cited in Frampton's op-ed, also indicate a low point in media trust. As for me, I have NOT shouted any expletives at

journalists like, according to Frampton, some of the truckers had done. All those who distrust the media do NOT do that. However, I have openly criticized journalists over the years, in writing and cartooning, especially for their refusal to cover certain stories and to respond to criticism with their regard (see caveat below).

Frampton rightfully argues, “responsible journalism is more important now than ever.” But what precisely constitutes “responsible journalism”? She does not stipulate. Is politically-biased [advocacy journalism](#) and the refusal of journalists to admit such bias somehow “responsible journalism”? Frampton manifests bias by highlighting Trump’s “enemy of the people” epithet and by stating without citing any clear statistics that “few journalists seem to be immune, with women, Blacks, members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community, Indigenous peoples and people of colour targeted for abuse more often than others.”

Like politicians, journalists tend to dwell in safe spaces. Common citizens like me rarely can ever pierce their buffered cocoons. Would “reporters and videojournalists have been harassed and spat upon” in Ottawa, if they had a reputation of being neutral, as opposed to one of collusion with government and corporations? How does government funding of the media affect the treatment of the Trudeau government by journalists (see [torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/lilley-cbc-will-get-more-of-your-money-mostly-because-it-serves-trudeau-liberals](#))? How does the corporatization of the media affect the treatment of media corporations by journalists? Do those at *The Telegram*, for example, dare criticize Saltwire Network? Or is the latter somehow without fault? The more taboos journalists possess, the less trust they will have.

Frampton argues that “most professional journalists in Canada work ethically and with diligence to try to inform their fellow citizens, and that media freedom is fundamental to democracy.” The problem is that “professional” tends to be a

euphemism for careerist. Careerists tend to place their careers above truth... and ethics. As a former professor, I certainly learned that regarding academic careerists. Journalists, especially those in relatively safe countries, should stop playing the victim card and, instead, confront their taboos, which inevitably include 'thou shalt not criticize the hands that feed.' Then they need to break those taboos in the name of truth... and at clear risk to their careers. Those not tied to the latter will think more clearly than those who are.

Frampton states that "members of the public need to educate themselves about legitimate sources of news and information, and media literacy [sic] should be taught in schools." The problem today, however, is that many educators are not educating, but rather indoctrinating (e.g., CRT training). And who is to decide which are "legitimate sources" and which are not? Trudeau, his government bureaucrats, and favored media outlets cannot simply and broadly be deemed "legitimate sources"! Was *Pravda* somehow a "legitimate source" in the former Soviet Union?

Frampton concludes, "in the absence of independent media and credible journalism, conspiracy theories and misinformation become the message." Too much subjectivity! What constitutes "independent media"? Corporate-controlled and government-funded media? And what about maligned "conspiracy theories" that turn out to be true (e.g., [Hillary Clinton's spying on Trump](#)) and the [media's refusal to cover them](#) when that occurs? Who determines what is "misinformation" and what is not? Should "misinformation" be censored and those propagating it punished? If so, does that sound like democracy, or rather like autocracy with a cadre of journalists of the *Pravda* variety? Far too many journalists today choose to ignore these fundamental questions. And so the elephant continues to sit in their press rooms staring at journalists, who do not/cannot see it...

Caveat: As a common citizen, I have learned to distrust and dislike the media via personal experiences I've had with journalists and editors. Note, however, that Frampton stands as an exception, for she has been surprisingly open to criticism, though, as mentioned, she did not address the criticism presented in this counter op-ed. The norm tends to be silence. Frampton has not followed that norm. In Québec, I protested as one of 150 paid, invited poets at the Festival International de la Poésie de Trois-Rivières. The journalists at *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Devoir* refused to report on that. Most of them simply did not respond. However, journalist Louis Hamelin responded, though curtly: "Fuck you, yankee" (see theamericandissident.org/quebec/le_devoir.html and theamericandissident.org/quebec/le_nouvelliste.html)!

In Concord (Massachusetts), I was arrested and incarcerated for a day due to a verbal conflict with a park ranger at Walden Pond State Reservation. The journalists at *The Concord Journal* refused to report on that (see theamericandissident.org/orgs/concord_journal.html).

In Baton Rouge (Louisiana), I was beaten and robbed in broad daylight by three black youths. At the time, I was teaching at an all-black university (Grambling State). The journalists at *The Advocate* refused to report on that.

As a professor at Fitchburg State University (Massachusetts), I fought against institutional corruption (nepotism, harassment, and highly biased evaluations) and was suddenly banned from my office. The journalists at *The Boston Globe*, *Boston Herald, Sentinel & Enterprise*, *Fitchburg Sentinel*, and *Chronicle of Higher Education* refused to publish anything with that regard. The student journalists of the student newspaper, *The Point*, refused to report on it.

As a patron, I was permanently banned without warning or due

process from my neighborhood library, Sturgis Library, for the crime of written criticism regarding its collection development statement. The journalists at the *Cape Cod Times* and *Boston Globe* refused to report on that. The professors at my alma mater, Northeastern University, School of Journalism refuse to expose their students to my diverse criticisms of journalists (see www.theamericandissident.org.blogspot.com/search?q=northeastern) . And so, how can I possibly admire journalists, let alone trust them?

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G. Tod Slone, PhD, lives on Cape Cod, where he was permanently banned in 2012 without warning or due process from Sturgis Library, one of the very oldest in the country. His civil rights are being denied today because he is not permitted to attend any cultural or political events held at his neighborhood library. The only stated reason for the banning was “for the safety of the staff and public.” He has no criminal record at all and has never made a threat. His real crime was that he challenged, in writing, the library’s “collection development” mission that stated “libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view.” His point of view was somehow not part of “all points of view.” He is a dissident poet/writer/cartoonist and editor of [The American Dissident](#).

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