

Opening Remarks

CBA: Live in Kingston

Kay Osborne, Board Member, CBA and General Manager, TV Jamaica **Monday July 18th 2011**

My name is Kay Osborne and I welcome you this evening, not in my usual TVJ role, but as a CBA board member, welcoming you on behalf of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.

The CBA is the largest global association of broadcasters with a UK based Secretariat. With more than 100 members in over 50 countries, the CBA promotes media freedom and broadcast excellence, and supports members by providing a forum for knowledge exchange and learning, offering training opportunities and bursaries to the employees of member organizations.

CBA members in Jamaica are RJR Communications Group and CVM. Associate members are CPTC and the Broadcasting Commission.

This reception is part of a 3 event CBA engagement with Caribbean broadcast journalists.

Information on the other 2 events, a training workshop for journalists and producers, and the production of a television programme, will be forthcoming momentarily.

This CBA engagement on media and democracy, media and politics, media and corruption and media bias is well timed. Nothing ratchets up debate on these issues like a general election and elections are due in Jamaica and in 2 other Caribbean countries next year.

In addition, the Manatt enquiry that was broadcast live on television and the publication of Wikileaks stories by one then two newspapers have stimulated debate on media's role in a democracy.

Debate on these issues rages elsewhere.

The use of Social Media in the Middle East and North Africa has led to unprecedented change towards democracy in some Arab countries.

France is grappling with the consequences of its tradition of protecting the powerful even as a widening phone-hacking scandal in the UK has prompted debate on media ethics, media and politics and media and corruption.

The arrest of Rebecca Brooks, former News of the World editor, and now the resignation of Scotland Yard police chief, Sir Paul Stephenson, the arrest of 9 additional persons linked to Rupert Murdoch's UK media empire may lead one to conclude that this is the worst of times for journalism, at least in the UK.

Is it?

Perhaps it's the best of times for journalism for it is the fearless, dogged, investigative work of a first rate journalist, the Guardian's Nick Davies, who broke the phone hacking story and who relentlessly pursued the story to now reveal the News of the World's corrupting culture and the grotesque enmeshment with political and police power elites.

Nick Davies himself says the News of the World story is not about the misconduct of journalists. He says, and I quote, *"this story is about how the power elite tend to look after each other. It is a story about the most powerful news organization in the world, the most powerful police force in Britain, the most powerful political party in the UK, and for good measure about the press complaints commission, and about how they all spontaneously colluded together, the story is about the way in which they casually assumed that the law didn't apply to them, and it's perfectly all right to lie to us."*

Nick Davies' courageous brand of journalism is similar that of two fearless Washington Post journalists thirty nine years ago who broke the story that a cheque for twenty five thousand dollars that was earmarked for a certain presidential campaign fund ended up in the bank account of a Watergate burglar, And so Nick Davies' extraordinary journalism feat is a clarion call for us in the Caribbean to recommit to independent, fearless, honest and balanced journalism that best serves the interests of our citizens and well serves democracy.

Let us use this opportunity window to hack away at collusion and corruption wherever these exist so every Caribbean child, regardless of the circumstances of birth, may one day benefit because you and I say yes to proper standards, yes to real democracy, and no to insidious forms of enslavement whether physical, financial, mind, spirit or soul.