

Editorial

Public affairs in a post-September 11th world

This issue of the *Journal of Public Affairs* appears against the backdrop of a world still very much shrouded in the impact and reflections of 11 September, the fall out of the Enron crisis in the USA and political upheaval in the Middle East. Such events will undoubtedly colour future thinking about the role and practice of public affairs and we feel sure will influence and stimulate future contributions to the journal.

The publication of this issue of the *Journal of Public Affairs* follows the previous impressive special double issue, which drew on papers first presented at the US conference on public affairs, issues management and corporate political strategy. This issue of the Journal reflects the growing vitality and diversity of papers that are now being submitted. Our editorial policy is to continue to both encourage general contributions from academics and practitioners of public affairs, as well as planning a number of future special issues in the Journal over the next two years on such themes as lobbying, public affairs case studies, corporate responsibility, issues management and reputation management and corporate and social responsibility. This issue contains an interesting and diverse range of papers which reflect the growing international interest in the Journal from contributors, decision and policy makers.

Whilst most research into political marketing focuses on its importance in election campaigns, some argue that marketing has an influence on other aspects of political behaviour. Jennifer Lees-Marshment and Peter Ingram of Aberdeen University, Scotland apply this topical perspective in a comparative study of Clinton's 1992 US Presidential

Election and Tony Blair's 1997 UK General Election campaign. One striking difference emerging from the two cases is that systemic features in the UK allowed for a broader, more coordinated and delivery-oriented approach. However, in both cases it emerges that marketing influenced the design as well as the presentation of the 'products' on offer.

In an accessible and well-justified paper, Mordecai Lee of Wisconsin University, Milwaukee analyses the duty of public reporting in public administration. Traditionally, public reporting has been accomplished *indirectly*, through news media coverage of government. However, recent research suggests a diminution of interest by the media in fulfilling its role as an instrument of democracy. Lee stresses that the public reporting obligation of public affairs professionals needs to shift to *direct* reporting. The paper opens doors for further research, including the compilation of a comprehensive list of intersectoral commonalities and differences in public affairs.

Michael Thomas, the thought-provoking Marketing Professor of Strathclyde University, Scotland opens his article *Thoughts on building a just market society* with a fundamental question: 'Can a secular society, exposed to the rigours of a global market, based on individual choice, lacking the settled ballast of religion or traditional social hierarchy, in the midst of a global communications explosion, also foster a sense of four key qualities, belonging, trust, respect and cohesion?' The key influence on the matter, in Thomas' estimation, is capitalism, which he deems will remain the model and driving force of the world economy. Capitalism *must* be under-

stood by those concerned with building a just market society. Through exploring its three key strands: financial capitalism, knowledge capitalism and social capitalism, the paper works to facilitate such an understanding.

Aodh Quinlivan and Emmanuelle Schön of Cork University, Eire assess Neil Kinnock's reform proposals within the longstanding debate on New Public Management (NPM). Following the 1988 allegations of fraud, mismanagement and nepotism in the College of Commission, the European bureaucracy was compelled to undergo a transformation. The authors examine the development and critique of the NPM paradigm in the framework of underlying assumptions linked to political, symbolic and structural aspects of the organisation. They assess the changing Commission, in specific terms of the demands for democracy, efficiency and institutional change within the complex patchwork of administrative and national cultures.

As both an effective and interesting strategy, managing public affairs through 'storytelling' is gradually getting the research attention that it deserves. This article suggests how this technique is capable of gaining the support of those external constituencies that organisations critically depend upon. Pursey Heugens of Concordia University, Canada investigates the storytelling practices of global foods industry representatives and environmental activist groups during the recent introduction of genetically modified food crops. Analysis exposes the fact that these parties use competing versions of the same narratives to win regulatory and public support in the market and non-market arenas in which these groups compete.

In a paper that should be of particular interest to practitioners, Craig Fleisher of New Brunswick University, Canada reports on the evolving profile, qualifications and roles of the Senior Public Affairs Officer. Focusing on PR roles in North American organisations, he points out the changing key requisites over recent decades. What is clear

is the demand for successful PR experience, new and broader qualifications, and a willingness to upgrade them. Undeniably, in North America such roles remain attractive, yet only for the select few individuals who are up to the challenge. Fleisher argues that the pressure is growing on practitioners to demonstrate the range of strategic contributions that public affairs can make to today's globally competitive organisations.

In the light of Unilever's recent lawsuit against Mercury Asset Management Group, Alastair Furnival of the Strategic Issues Group, Australia muses: 'Imagine that instead . . . a company of Unilever's size, and dependence on reputation were to pursue its public advisers in court.' More often than not, public affairs methodology is dominated by cost-benefit questions, with risk introduced as a limit-factor, rather than as a commodity. Examining the principle approaches to risk valuation, Furnival concludes that none of the criticisms mean that risk isolation, or risk harnessing for long-term outcomes should not be a core pursuit of public affairs professionals.

Tom Spencer and Rinus van Schendelen, in a thought-provoking article, explore the longer-term significance for public affairs of the events of 11 September. They acknowledge that 11 September has encouraged a renewed focus on crisis preparedness on an international scale. The authors point to the need to consider how best to impart public affairs wisdom and offer four archetypes which, they suggest, reflect the key attributes that effective public affairs practitioners may need to cultivate.

Focusing on debates about what the eventual retirement age will be, given shortfalls in pension funds, shortfalls in government funding and the impact of downturns in stock market realizations, Alastair Furnival's paper reflects on the future implications of a rising retirement age. Here he points to the suggestion of one forecasting group in the UK who have suggested that pensionable age for the

average citizen will have to rise to the age of 72 and considers the implications for such a scenario.

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Phil Harris and Danny Moss
Editors