

We The People

Program 75

The Whistle Blower



For over 100 years the Press has played an important role in democracy by uncovering fraud, corruption and the misuse of power in government and business. Unfortunately mans greed and avarice knows no bounds and people in trusted positions take advantage of the organisation. In more recent time's radio and television have exposed this enduring rot and very effectively. However as main stream media declines there is less investigative journalism. Now let me digress for a moment and mention a referee and an English Bobby. Both will blow a whistle when they need to stop play or halt an action and hence in the 1970's the American consumer advocate Ralph Nader coined the phrase "The Whistle Blower". This denotes someone who alerts authorities or managers to breaches of conduct or potential illegality. As a matter of interest in 1863 Abraham Lincoln introduced the False Claims Act making it a serious offense to sell fake gun powder to the Union during the Civil War. A Whistle Blower could in fact be awarded up to 30% of the value of the goods as a reward and this still applies today with the US tax office.

So in keeping with the Whistleblower I want to share a story with you about a member of the Gold Coast Wright family. John Wright is a cardio-thoracic surgeon of some note. Australian born Dr John Wright was the first Australian to be awarded honorary appointments to the American College of Surgeons, the American College of Chest Physicians and the American Society of Thoracic Surgeons. He was also the first-appointed Australian professor of cardiac surgery. It goes without saying he is a brilliant surgeon who has saved the lives of thousands of Australian's as this bloke knows what he's doing. Now 25 years ago he was deeply concerned with his hospital's management and the conduct of other clinicians. True to his name John Wright did the *right thing* and made the executive aware of these shortfalls. Before long he was ostracised and sacked for having the audacity to question the medical fraternity and the following 25 years have been a nightmare. His story has been in the public arena for the last 15 years with the open invitation to argue in writing but no one has. It turns out some of his peer operatives were akin to Judas along with many other dark and brooding characters who were only interested in maintaining their self serving world deriving benefit at the expense of others. Clearly they had taken their 30 pieces of silver and saw it essential to excise John Wright from their sordid ranks. They did this with all the skill of a shady surgeon and Doctor John Wright was fired never to practice surgery again.

As far as I can see this dreadful story was never properly investigated and justice never delivered. At 83 John Wright still wakes to the crime each morning and the loss of so much, while sleep doesn't bring peace either such is the effect on this innocent man. He is a quietly spoken gentleman and as you would expect a good husband and father of 3 and is only guilty of blowing the whistle. This makes me angry and time does not lessen the impact of the wrongs committed against him. The bureaucracy didn't want to know, the medical fraternity closed ranks and the AMA didn't seem to care. John is a skilled Australian surgeon who simply told the truth as he saw it and paid a dreadful price with his life ruined and complete loss of income and standing. It has proved to me that deep within the ranks of the bureaucracy and the hearts of men lies a basic evil tenant which will do all it can to control, regardless of the loss to others. This level of treachery is well known to government and to the medical fraternity. Queensland whistle blower senior nurse Toni Hoffman claims she was treated like a leper by the Bligh government and Queensland Health and she probably was. In the end however she exposed Jayant Patel, the surgeon whose incompetent practice led to his arrest and prosecution. She too paid a dreadful price.

Whistle blowers should be applauded and we should encourage the laudable dobbing in of people who do the wrong thing by others and especially so in medical matters and government. We the people wouldn't otherwise know and yet the laws protecting whistle blowers are very weak. Let's not shoot the messenger, rather just catch those who betray us and surgically expurgate them from society's pages.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley

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