



# Media and your School

BY CLIFFORD SCOTT

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**A**s you flip through the many channels that come across the airwaves these days, what do you see? I guarantee you are seeing a lot of coverage of “America under Attack”, or “Target: Terrorism”, or maybe even “America Strikes Back”. It’s impossible to avoid, especially for the three weeks that followed September 11. It actually got on my nerves.

This is one of those occasions where the media can work against us. Sure, we know exactly what is going on. However, did it really make us a better society as we all watched two airliners crash into the World Trade Center towers over and over again? Is it helping society when we hear of Anthrax cases popping up across the continent, or is it just creating a general panic. Even though the experts interviewed continually reassure us that what is going on with the anthrax cases is controllable and far less of a threat than the coming flu season, the media somehow injects a sense of panic into the situation.

Now, I’m not saying that we should all stop watching television and listening to radios. A democracy needs an independent watchdog to tell us what’s going on. The media definitely does have its place in society. I, for one, gazed upon it like it was a temple during my University days. What I am saying is that we all should take a step back and think carefully about what we are hearing from the media.

First of all, while the American networks seem to have the best coverage, I believe it is important once in awhile to watch the daily reports through a Canadian point of view. It’s true that we need to know what the Americans are thinking as they are at the forefront of this conflict. But, when something happens, most of us automatically go for CNN. It is important to remember, however, that Larry King is not the end all, and that Rex Murphy might have something important to say as well.

Second, it is important to remember that the media can put a spin on anything. Just as the government can. One should never take something seen on television as the final word.

Digital video is an amazing technology, and can be made to impress whatever impression the editor wants to leave on its audience. For examples of this, you can look at the results of the US lead strikes on Afghanistan. We see pictures of deserted empty buildings, craters left on airfields, etc. However, we never see pictures that would resemble those that came out of Ground Zero in New York. There may not be as many souls lost, but destruction is destruction. While the press is free, it is not always without the hand of the government overseeing everything in time of war. In this case, many media outlets admit to allowing the government editing rights too much of the footage released on air.

Finally, The Internet. Even during the Gulf war, the closest thing our generation has seen compared to the current conflict, the internet was not the force it is today. The web sites containing pictures of people falling out of towers, parodies of Osama Bin Laden, even e-mail’s circulating suggesting that flight numbers might have contained secret codes - this is a form of propaganda that has never been seen before. Nothing should be taken automatically as true.

Some day, the media will go back to some form of normal as will society. Canadian news broadcasts will actually contain some Canadian content within the first half-hour and we will stop hearing about how the tragedy deeply touched different Hollywood stars. Until that time remember that although we are always at the will of the media, hopefully we will eventually get back to hearing about other things that are going on in the world, with more balanced viewpoints.

*Clifford Scott was a videographer with Auburn Air. He also was picked by Environment Canada to be a member of the youth journalist delegation at the World Conservation Congress in Montreal, 1996.*