

# CAFAS Update

4  
18th January 1995

Next Meeting:

Saturday 28th January 1:30pm  
Room MB 307  
Birkbeck College,  
Malet Street, London WC1  
Nearest Tube: Goodge Street

## Scientific Fraud

Dr Chris Chapman is collecting evidence on scientific fraud. He can be contacted in confidence on:  
Phone: 0532-584550  
21 Newlaithes Road,  
Horsforth,  
Leeds LS18 4LG

## Promotions

There has been active interest in pursuing the issues raised in **CAFAS** Report No.3, with more than one university responding. A Discussion of the Senate on promotions in Cambridge was held on November 22. It was well-attended, though few felt confident to speak. The call was for the establishment of a review body to work with other universities. The issue now goes to the General Board for their comments. BBC Radio Cambridgeshire took the theme up.

## Book Review

*Whistleblowing, Subversion or Corporate Citizenship?*, Edited by Gerald Vinten  
Published by Paul Chapman 1994.

This is a collection of articles, many of which are reprints from business journals. A clear objective of the book is to provide business and management with ways of dealing with a potentially damaging problem. It also offers advice to those who feel the need to blow the whistle. The contributors deal extensively with examples of the treatment whistleblowers can expect focusing on ethical, practical and psychological implications of whistleblowing for management and employees. It also has chapters on US and English law.

Attention is brought to British grass roots organisations such as Freedom to Care and Public Concern at Work which have emerged in response to a growing demand. It would have been helpful if the organisations had been contacted to check the addresses shown at the back. Since the book went to print **CAFAS** has also emerged from the further and higher education sectors.

Workers who blow the whistle by exposing malpractice at their workplace, even internally, will almost certainly experience victimisation including dismissal. The most common reasons given by the employers are breach of confidentiality and trust. The whistleblower's colleagues and union are invariably drawn into taking sides, the overwhelming majority siding with the employer. The Swansea case illustrates this. Vinten should know this from the Davies' Report.

However his own contribution, which claims to reveal for the first time the employer's view of the case of nurse Graham Pink who blew the whistle on inadequate health care, appears not to take cognisance of Davies' findings. The attack on Pink is classic and at odds with the tone of the other contributions, which seek a more conciliatory approach to whistleblowing. It questions his professionalism and trade unionism, claiming lack of support from colleagues. Vinten uses the issue of patient confidentiality to justify management's claims and exemplifies the kind of attack whistleblowers can expect. It is common knowledge that the public services in Britain have been decimated over the last 15 years, giving rise to the growth in whistleblowing. Pink's claims, like the other cases of whistleblowing, are entirely credible whereas managements' claims to ethical rectitude are currently being undermined by the exposure of corruption at the highest level. Vinten's attack on Pink has to be seen in the context of what the BMA's Ruling Council claims to be a "politically inspired mission...to end free and uniform health care."

What is happening in health is happening in other public services. Vinten cites the cases in education of Swansea and Bournemouth. He draws attention to the "perceived" problem by "some" of the falling standards in a period of mass education. He apparently does not share this view and his claim that "University politics at their worst can be among the most ferocious and duplicitous of any organisation" does not explain Swansea, Bournemouth and more recently Huddersfield and Portsmouth. The reason for **CAFAS**'s existence is the unprecedented willingness of management to resort to disciplinary procedures, suspensions and dismissals as a way of intimidating those who draw attention to declining standards. This is a result of the import of

commercial practices to conform with Government policy of reducing public expenditure.

The book's bias is to management whose accounts are deemed "professional" whereas those given by the whistleblowers themselves are "personal". Thus the whistleblowers's own professionalism, which prompted them to expose corruption, is effectively devalued. Most of the contributors justify whistleblowing. However the editor leaves us with no concluding answer to the question in the subtitle. In fact whistleblowers may be neither "subversives" nor "corporate citizens" but may be representing the interests of society as a whole, particularly where public money and health and safety are involved.

Unfortunately the book fails to analyse the connection between economic and political change and the increase in the incidence of whistleblowing. Vinten's reference to cases of whistleblowing in 800 BC is no substitute for an analysis of the phenomenon. The failure to analyse its context leaves the book ahistorical. A concluding chapter was needed not only to address the question in the subtitle but to draw together the contributions and place them in their context.

Geraldine Thorpe & Pat Brady

## CAFAS Meeting of 26th November 1994

The following was agreed:

- Our winning tactics at Lambeth could be improved by setting up "telephone trees" to mobilise members quickly. As a first step, Pat and Geraldine would try to organise such a response system for London.
- We should call upon NATFHE to set up a commission of inquiry into standards in FE. The AUT have resolved to set one up for HE. Members should press for resolutions to this effect to go to the next NATFHE conference.
- Two of the Bishops thought to be sympathetic would be invited to become **CAFAS** patrons.
- Four **CAFAS** representatives should meet with the same number from Article 26 to discuss possible working relations between the two organisations.
- Dr Amir Majid would be appointed a legal advisor to **CAFAS**

**Letters, news items and short articles for CAFAS Update should be addressed to:**

39 College Street,  
Grimsby DN34 4TN

**A membership form is attached for you to photocopy and circulate to your colleagues**

**Patrons** - Details not included in this issue

## Membership Fees & Affiliation

**Photocopy this application for membership and distribute it among your colleagues. If you haven't yet joined yourself, could you pay your membership fees.**

**Try to get your local AUT or NATFHE to affiliate to CAFAS. Please complete the form below.**

Send to CAFAS Membership Secretaries, 7 Benn Street, London E9 5SU

Name.....Address.....

.....Post Code.....Date.....

I/we wish to join/affiliate to CAFAS and enclose a cheque for.....

(£10 p.a. for individual membership, £5 p.a. for students and unwaged, £25 p.a. for trade union affiliation)

### Bankers Order

To (name & address of your bank).....

Your Bank Sort Code.....Your Account Number.....

Signature.....

Please pay CAFAS the sum of .....every year starting on (date).....

### For Bank Information

Account: CAFAS

Sort Code 30-95-46

Account no: 1868136

Lloyds Bank plc, Swansea Branch, PO Box 66, Swansea SA1 3AP