

What to consider before you blow the whistle

by Andrea Bunting

Suppression Stories

by Brian Martin

Published by Fund for Intellectual Dissent, Box U129 Wollongong University, Wollongong NSW, 1997, 171pp, \$20, ISBN 0 646 0349 X and

Whistleblowers

by Quentin Dempster

ABC Books, Sydney NSW, 1997, 251pp, \$16.95, ISBN 0 7333 0504 0

If ordered through EA Books, PO Box 588, Crows Nest 2065, phone 02 9438 5355, fax 02 9438 5343, email<eabooks@eol.ieaust.org.au>, \$7 applies for packing and postage.

As engineers we may sometimes witness unsafe, environmentally damaging or unethical practices in our workplaces. Most of us would probably try to get the situation rectified, perhaps taking our concerns to management. But what if management refuses to take action, or worse still, responds by "shooting the messenger"? How many of us would then take the matter outside the company? For those who decide to "blow the whistle" the consequences can be devastating.

The issue of whistleblowing is explored in two Australian books published this year: *Whistleblowers* by Quentin Dempster and *Suppression Stories* by Brian Martin.

In *Whistleblowers*, Dempster recounts the stories of ten Australian people who faced an ethical dilemma and decided to put their consciences first. All paid a heavy personal price. Dempster's case studies come from a range of fields including engineering, banking, science and health. One story describes the recent high profile case of Dr Helen James from the Civil Aviation Authority. In her role as a senior manager with the CAA, she became concerned about problems with public safety. After getting no action from the CAA, she finally went to the media and was subsequently threatened with summary dismissal. Eventually the federal government intervened.

But surely, cases of ill-treatment of

whistleblowers are rare? Not according to Brian Martin. His book, which deals with the broader concept of "suppression of dissent" rather than just "whistleblowing", explores the ways that dissenters are treated. Such is the success of methods used to stamp out dissent that most dissenters never reach the stage of

Whistleblowers recounts the stories of ten people who put their consciences first

becoming whistleblowers. Martin uses a number of case studies to provide insight into how suppression can be opposed. Thus this book functions as a guide for dissenters on what action to take – or not to take.

Martin, who is the national president of Whistleblowers Australia, has drawn a number of his case studies from academia, thus focusing on the suppression of *ideas*. For example, in the 1970s environmental studies were considered threatening to more orthodox disciplines. Academics who championed environmental courses or who pursued environmental research were a threat to estab-

lished scientific elites and outside vested interests. Many came under attack, often from university administrators. Similar treatment was meted out to those who opposed nuclear power.

Very few cases of suppression see the light of day. The typical reaction of those who come under attack from their organisation's management is to hide their shame. This is because management's attack is rarely directed at the dissenter's views; instead the employee may be told that their work is unsatisfactory, their behavior is unacceptable and so on. Understandably, many are too intimidated, afraid of losing their jobs or damaging

Suppression Stories functions as a guide for dissenters

their career prospects, to take the matter further.

So what action should you take if you are considering blowing the whistle? Most people would probably start with the "proper channels": using grievance procedures, seeking support from one's professional body, taking the issue to an ombudsperson, taking action in court. Martin is sceptical about the effectiveness of these channels; frequently such action backfires or diverts attention from more effective means. Although there is now some legislation designed to protect whistleblowers, both Dempster and Martin warn that this legislation may be too weak and may not offer sufficient protection. Martin's message is this: take *judicious* action. Mobilise support, collect documentary evidence, develop a strategy, organise a campaign and seek advice from other whistleblowers. The organisation Whistleblowers Australia might be a good place to seek such advice.

In keeping with his aim of providing information to whistleblowers, Martin has also published *Suppression Stories* on the Internet. It can be found at <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/>. ●

Andrea Bunting is a lecturer in engineering at RMIT, and is currently on leave working on her PhD at Wollongong University's Department of Science and Technology Studies.

Dark Matter, Missing Planets and New Comets (Paradoxes Resolved, Origins Illuminated), Revised Edition by Tom Van Flandern. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1999. 551 pp. \$22.50, paperback. ISBN 1-55643-268-2, tvf@mindspring.com

Suppression Stories by Brian Martin. Wollongong, Australia: Fund for Intellectual Dissent, 1997. 171 pp. Paperback. ISBN 0-646-30349-X, <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/>

Astronomy and its theoretical outgrowth astrophysics are not in the popular mind regarded as revolutionary sciences in the Kuhnian sense; yet we might recall that the observation of the Jovian moons four centuries ago, the extraterrestrial origin of meteorites two centuries ago, the confirmation of light bending near the sun early this century, and the recent impacts of comet Shoemaker-Levi 9 on Jupiter mark four major changes in paradigm over the relatively short course of science.

Tom Van Flandern is a Yale-educated Celestial Mechanic and former U.S. naval observer. He notes, according to a previous reviewer (Keay, 1993), that current observations within the solar system suggest the speed of gravity is "at least 20 times the velocity of light." Does that enliven your sense of space-time? Read on and discover that asteroids and comets are creatures of orbits (chapter 6) originating not from an unformed planet (the asteroid belt) and the almost inconceivably large Oort sphere (Van Flandern calculates it would hold all the stars in the Milky Way), but from the ejecta of a recent (about 3 million years ago) catastrophic event in or near the asteroid belt. As an anthropologist with a strong interest in astronomy, I cannot judge the ultimate merit of either the current or Van Flandern's alternative hypotheses. I can, however, observe that some of Van Flandern's hypotheses predict current reports of novel data. Astronomy is among the oldest human professions. Insofar as humans are political, the proclivity of power elites and bureaucracies to perpetuate themselves, and the corruptibility of humans in the face of and even more so in the defense of institutional power, are proverbial. Consider the coincidence between the Egyptian realignment of temples and the period of unrest between the old and new kingdoms (Tompkins, 1971): a cost of the discovery of precession?

Did our planetary system reconfigure itself, 3 million years ago, into our nine (eight?) planet system, with the moons of Venus and X—Mercury and Mars, respectively—migrating to solar orbits? An earlier reviewer (Castle, 1994) finds many of the issues raised by Van Flandern interesting but knows of "no...mechanism that would cause a planetary breakup." I believe the same objection was raised against Wegener's continental drift.

Why is Iapetus dichotomously dark and light if not from some event within the solar system? Earth could have been on the far side to it. At 3 million years ago, no "death star" binary of the sun with a 26-million-year periodicity (of the "great dyings," the last roughly 13 million years ago) is implicated. Since the

publication in early 1999 of Van Flandern's book, readers of *Science* have been treated to news of three additional members of our solar system with bisected terrain: Mars (May 28), Ganymede (October 1), and Triton (October 15).

Triton has "all the craters...on one side" of a surface "possibly less than 10 million years old," based on the reanalysis of 1989 data. "About 40% of Ganymede's surface is covered by dark, heavily cratered terrain, and the remainder...bright terrain."

New Mars Orbital Surveyor (MOS) Mars topography shows six enormous shield volcanoes, three great circular impact basins (five of the former roughly antipodal to the greatest of the latter), the northern hemisphere with featureless, abyssal (?) lowlands and heavily cratered (moonlike) highlands to the south. If the shield of the five volcanoes were lowlands, the north/south topographic divide would be very nearly half and half. Van Flandern mentions dichotomous Martian terrain in support of the ex-planet X hypothesis, but what we see with new MOS data is not supportive of that hypothesis. Given featureless highlands, it might be another matter. And given the apparent falsification of the "face" on Mars (Pierri, 1999) by MOS photographic data, one wonders what other surprises are to be found in the not yet disclosed Cydonia photographic data.

Why is an anthropologist reviewing this "revised" edition (of a book published 7 years ago, with four new chapters appended) rather than an astronomer? The luck of the draw? Perhaps, but let me report the puzzlement of the research librarian who assisted in my preparation for this review. "Van Flandern has written columns in several astronomy magazines," he told me. "None of which has reviewed his book. I found that rather strange."

If the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* reader finds this reception of Van Flandern's book strange, let me recommend Brian Martin's *Suppression Stories* as a primer on the structure of intellectual change. Martin (see Martin, 1998), like the late Thomas Kuhn, is a physicist "gone soft." But while Kuhn turned his analytical talents toward the obscure early histories of physical sciences, Martin examines a far more accessible current intellectual landscape. Of course, he finds "patterns of suppression" to be among a host of patterns the whistle-blower or intellectual revolutionary may expect to encounter, to include the threat of defamation suits in Australia, the author's home.

Because Martin has homogenized, by the sheer breadth of his clearly explicated sample, the individuals and their various ideas, a certain dispassion pervades the book. I suppose this is in part a response to continuing (after Kuhn's) criticism of the social and anthropological sciences relative to physical sciences, and a successful one. Those ignorant of recurring patterns in history and society very probably have no hope of shaping them. Martin knows this, I think, and offers the intellectual explorer a reliable, methodical reconnoiter of potential pitfalls, ambushes, and outright attacks or, as often, ringing silences.

Ignoring Van Flandern's broadside against the current, accretionary model is the stuff of the social construction of science! Certainly the fit of new data, or its misfit, should drive our hypotheses; yet, I found his epistemology vague

in some areas. Van Flandern, unlike Martin, raises more questions than he answers, which can be a virtue in a book and useful in the search for novel implications in the stream of data from continuing exploration of the solar system. Both books have references and indices.

We know an order of magnitude, if not several, more about our solar system than we did a century ago. Have our hypotheses kept pace? Van Flandern argues they have not. If one supposes they have, then one may enjoy *Mason & Dixon* more than *Dark Matter, Missing Planets and New Comets*. Or one might read *Suppression Stories* first and enjoy all three.

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The Powerful Placebo—From Ancient Priest to Modern Physician by Arthur K. Shapiro and Elaine Shapiro. Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

The Placebo Effect—An Interdisciplinary Exploration Edited by Anne Harrington. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. Paperback, 1999.

Placebo is something of an oddity in modern Western culture. This is a culture self-consciously taking science as authoritative, congratulating itself that its medical practice is based on science and condescending toward beliefs for which there is no concrete evidence. Psychic phenomena are decried and pooh-poohed. Yet the placebo phenomenon is fully acknowledged even as it seems to establish that nonmaterial influences—psychological if not “psychic”—can effect powerful material results.

This incongruity comes even more sharply into focus when scientific medicine accepts psychosomatic illness as entirely real while dismissing faith healing as superstition: those are surely but different consequences of the same sort of interaction between psyche and body. Incongruous too is that the term “placebo” carries the negative connotation of “sham treatment” at the same time as its effects are beneficial to the recipient or experiencer of the placebo (H236).¹

¹ Page numbers in Shapiro are given with an “S” and in Harrington with an “H.”

Censorship, libel and the delicate politics of dissent

The Courier-Mail Weekly p.9 (31 May 1997)

THE irony of this book about suppression of dissent is that it was rejected by a nervous commercial publisher and the author, in self-publishing the slim volume, admits it was censored.

Brian Martin made changes based on his own judgment, the advice of friends and informal legal advice to avoid the risk of defamation.

Souvenir Press saw libel as "the one big problem", and after considering a chapter outline, decided against publishing in Britain.

Martin, a social scientist at the University of Wollongong, describes his experiences and insights from more than 15 years of studying and opposing suppression of dissent. His interest is mainly in cases involving science and academia, but they embrace such controversial areas as nuclear power, fluoridation, pesticides and AIDS.

Among the causes he supports are those of a colleague at Canberra's Australian National University denied tenure in 1979 for an interdisciplinary programme dealing, broadly, with environmental issues; an Indian scientist transferred within New Delhi's Nehru University after speaking out against the government's nuclear policies; an American scientist who theorised that AIDS originated from contaminated polio vaccines; scientists attacked because of criticism of pesticides.

Studying the fluoridation debate, Martin concludes that some scientific criticisms deserve to be taken seriously. But he finds many who accept the pro-fluoridationists' idea that the only criticisms of fluoridation come from unscientific cranks or right-wingers who see it as a plot to poison the public.

In Martin's view, the "proper channels" simply do not work for dissenters. Time and again, he says, he has seen them tried. Time and again he has seen them fail, either by negative decision or by interrupting and diverting the flow of an effective campaign.

He is positive about the media's role in exposing suppression, finding that compared with the "proper channels", the media are often "refreshingly open and supportive".

Brian Martin in 1996 became national president of Whistleblowers Australia. He notes the close connection between whistleblowing and suppression of intellectual dissent, but points to differences: suppression of dissent can occur by blocking appointments or publications, but only in some cases could those suppressed be called whistleblowers.

He tells of the work of William De Maria in the Social Work Department of the University of Queensland whose team was inundated with phone calls when they asked whistleblowers to contact them. It confirmed what Martin had been saying for years: the publicised cases were the tip of the iceberg.

Most governments, he says, are

SUPPRESSION STORIES
By Brian Martin
Fund for Intellectual Dissent, PB \$20
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Reviewed by **JOHN COLEMAN**
John Coleman is a freelance journalist

reluctant to pass legislation protecting whistleblowers and when they do, it is usually hedged with restrictions. The Queensland Government's whistleblower law gives relief only if the whistleblower goes through "proper channels" — and this means not going to the media.

Surveying whistleblowers, Martin found recurring responses, including: don't trust the system, be prepared for any conceivable attacks, don't be naive (they had few allies and were attacked in unexpected ways), document everything...

The hallmarks of Martin's book are dedication to painstaking accuracy and balance. Suppression, he points out, can also occur in social movements which are so often subject to suppression. He has heard of liberal feminists being harassed and slandered because radical feminism was a workplace's dominant version. Of environmentalists who have lost jobs at an environmental organisation because they didn't follow the right line.

Martin also in a sense accuses himself of suppression, pointing out his focus in areas he knows of personally in science and academia — thus raising the question of suppression of feminists, free-market fundamentalists, radical theologians and police whistleblowers.

MARTIN also supports people with whom he almost certainly disagrees. For instance, the book gives the Internet address for the Fund for Intellectual Suppression, which in turn lists the address of a prominent Australian anti-Holocaust campaigner, who seeks the right to dispute Holocaust accounts without being labelled racist or anti-Semitic.

If the book has a minor shortcoming, it is in Brian Martin, the meticulously careful scientist with many published articles in scientific journals, seeking to appeal to a popular audience. He does not always fit easily into the mould. Yet, given its importance, the book deserves a wide readership.

Martin has proved adroit in handling the problem of defamation — there have been threats, but he has not been sued. He has avoided this in three ways: by studying the law himself, seeking free legal advice and comments from friends — and those mentioned in his articles.

Martin says he has kept a record of the original version, safely stored with a friend in another country. And since defaming the dead is not illegal, eventually the uncensored version will be published.

(Available from Fund for Intellectual Dissent, Box U129 Wollongong University, Wollongong NSW 2500).

Suppression an art form practised by the powerful

SUPPRESSION is a disturbing word in a society that considers itself open; it is the stuff of dictatorships.

Alas, dictatorships — or, at any rate, potential dictatorships — abound: they are to be found in universities, the bureaucracy, the media, the churches, the corporate sector; wherever power is exercised.

The art of suppression — and, indeed, it is a highly developed art form — is not always brutal in its application (although it can be and often is).

It can be applied with expert subtlety; a nod and a wink, an adverse report, a quiet word dropped in a receptive ear.

Suppression is a weapon used by powerful, entrenched interests against those who dare to dissent or even question. It is by no means unknown in Canberra.

Brian Martin is probably the world's foremost expert on suppression, and it all began here.

Now, he has written a book about it; an uneasy, discomfiting, niggling sort of book that worms its way into your consciousness like the half-forgotten nightmare that suddenly comes back in full at midday.

This is the stuff of Kafka — but, sadly, it is not fiction. Suppression, he warns, is everywhere.

None of us is as free as we like to think. So long as we live and work within the bounds of orthodoxy, we are fine; but step outside the mainstream and the climate changes abruptly, the veneer falls away.

You have only to glance at the fate of whistleblowers and dissidents who are harassed, ostracised, intimidated, reprimanded, transferred, censored, gagged and dismissed. Our freedom is significantly qualified.

Marcuse, as long ago as 1964, observed in *One-Dimensional Man* that the organisation of industrial society tends towards the totalitarian, a term he expanded to include "a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination [of society] which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests".

That, precisely, is the suppression addressed by Dr Martin.

The co-editor of the groundbreaking *Intellectual Suppression* (1986), Martin has established himself as an international authority on suppression, all the more remarkable for its being done as a sideline to his paid work as a social scientist at the University of Wollongong.

He has now detailed his work in the field with case studies that make grim reading; he has also written sound advice to those inclined to fight the system that suppresses.

In Canberra, and at the Australian National University in particular, Martin is revered as a hero by some, and regarded as an accursed troublemaker by others. Trouble he most certainly made.

◆ Norman Abjorensen is discomfited by a book born in Canberra and finds that freedom is significantly qualified.

Armed with a PhD in theoretical physics from Sydney University, he arrived in Canberra in 1976 after a year of unemployment, and was hired as a research assistant in the Centre for Resource and Environment Studies.

As a newcomer he was struck by the dominant orthodoxies that prevailed, relieved by only a few pockets of innovation which he sought out, notably the Human Sciences Program — an experimental multi-disciplinary program that delved into both the dynamics of society and the dynamics of the psyche.

"The Human Sciences Program was a threat to some traditional academics not so much for what it taught but because of what it was in organisational terms," writes Martin. To the conventional mind, it trespassed on closely guarded territory.

The jealous guards hit back: Jeremy Evans, a senior lecturer in the program, was up for tenure in 1979, and the reappointments committee recommended against it, unusual at the time.

His crime? He had broken out of the traditional disciplinary

Each of them was threatened with denial of tenure.

background and championed interdisciplinary studies — environmental studies, very broadly interpreted — when universities were only just coming to terms with these issues, Martin writes.

There began a campaign, a good deal of which was conducted in the news pages and the letters page of this newspaper. Evans subsequently won.

It might have stood as an isolated case but for the intervention of John Hookey, who had taught in the Law Faculty at the ANU, pioneering the teaching of environmental and resource law in the early 1970s.

Hookey was an ardent supporter of Aboriginal land rights, and wrote a stinging critique of a prominent judge's decision in a land-rights matter and appeared as junior counsel in a High Court case on Papuan land rights.

For his troubles, Hookey came in one day to find a note on his desk from the Dean of Law advising him that he was unlikely to be recommended for tenure. Hookey then took another job, but when he read about Evans he had a feeling of *deja vu* and contacted Evans.

"There were a number of similarities between Hookey and Evans. Each of them had

undertaken innovative teaching in the environmental area. Each of them had a respectable research and teaching record. And each of them was threatened with denial of tenure," Martin writes.

Pondering the similarities led Martin into further investigation in which he uncovered a larger picture of suppression of environmental scholarship in Australia, extending into other universities and the CSIRO.

"What was behind all this?" he asks. "One factor was the hostility to environmentalism which, in the early 1970s, was seen as a dangerous practice to prevailing practices." It was an intellectual environment in which Galileo would have felt at home.

But suppression, while readily apparent, is hard to prove. No administrator ever says to his victim: "We dismissed you because you were exercising your academic freedom in a way we didn't like". A justification is always found. In suppression cases, Martin says. "Everyone is sincere — at least that has always been my working hypothesis".

The experience at the ANU shaped a crusader, and Martin set about gathering an impressive dossier on suppression in numerous fields — pesticides, nuclear research, fluoridation and so on. A familiar pattern showed up in all of them: vested interests sensed a threat.

A pattern of suppression was replicated: there had to be vested interests and they had to have power that could be used against dissidents.

The threat of defamation is always present, and those under attack from dissidents are not slow to threaten legal action, as Martin has found.

Defamation law, he writes, merely "undermines the search for truth and ... results in greater misrepresentation in the long run".

The weapon of suppression can take many seemingly innocuous forms: one is the process of peer review for academic publishing and promotion. Although its rationale is quality control, the process can easily be used — and often is — to suppress dissent.

Just how widespread suppression is — and Martin is often asked — is difficult to establish, but it is much more prevalent than people realise. He suspects there is even suppression about the incidence of suppression.

May there always be troublemakers with the diligence and persistence of Brian Martin. Our tenuous and fragile liberty depends on it.

◆ *Suppression Stories*. By Brian Martin. Fund for Intellectual Dissent, University of Wollongong. 171pp. \$20 (\$12 for low-income earners). The book is available from Box U129, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW 2500, or on the Internet at http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/dc_documents/

We all pay the price of suppression in universities

NORMAN ABJORENSEN makes the valid point in his review of Brian Martin's book *Suppression Stories* (CT, April 6, p.9) that our freedoms are significantly qualified.

The review emphasises that at universities the art of subtle suppression seems especially fine-tuned. At first glance this appears strange, given that universities proclaim themselves, and are generally perceived to be, bastions of freedom of thought and intellectual endeavour.

In fact, like any other major institution in capitalist society, universities reflect the contradictions of that society.

In universities this becomes "a contradiction between the ideal of unlimited intellectual development, free from social, political and ideological restraint, and the tight intellectual reins imposed by capitalism. The liberal mystique of education clashes with its social content."

The rapidly increasing commodification of education (in the form of HECS, up-front fees and so on) only exacerbates the problem for alternative thinkers and dissidents in universities.

This commodification, coupled with a view of higher education as an adjunct of business, will see universities become more illiberal and oppressive.

The whole process of appointment, tenure and promotion to universities is one of control. It is used to ensure "safe" people populate our higher educational institutions.

Indeed, tenure itself, which offered some limited protection for independents, is now under attack across Australian universities.

Of course, some non-mainstream academics slip through the net and get appointed. But, as Abjorensen's review highlights, in many instances their university working life is made unbearable and they eventually leave, or rather are forced out.

All of us are the poorer for this suppression.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

JOHN PASSANT
Kambah

How academic orthodoxy is enforced

Review by Allen Myers

Brian Martin, an occasional contributor to *Green Left Weekly*, has produced an intriguing and very readable account of the suppression of dissent in Australia, mainly in the academic field.

Martin, a social scientist now located at the University of Wollongong, has not done a comprehensive study with questionnaires, tables of statistics and the usual trappings. Intellectual suppression doesn't lend itself to that sort of study, because it is usually carried out in subtle ways and is generally denied by the suppressors.

Instead, Martin discusses in some detail a series of different cases which indicate different mechanisms of suppression (denial of tenure, sacking, refusal to publish, defamation proceedings) and some of the varied tactics for fighting back.

Incidents of suppression are far more common than is generally realised, Martin believes, although it is impossible to say *how* widespread it is. The cases we hear about are usually only those in which an unusually tenacious fight back succeeds in gaining some brief media attention.

There would be more cases of successful resistance, Martin concludes, if fewer of the people suppressed had illusions about what can be achieved through "proper channels". More effective are public campaigns:

"With a campaign, formal channels may not even be necessary. Politicians and top administrators can always intervene if the urgency is great enough. A noisy campaign is more likely to trigger their involvement than a case following standard bureaucratic protocol."

Indeed, he cites a study by Jean Lennane, presi-

Suppression Stories

By Brian Martin

Fund for Intellectual Dissent, 1997. 171 pp.

dent of Whistleblowers Australia, who interviewed whistleblowers who had taken their complaints through official channels. The most frequent response was that official channels had "made no difference"; in the remaining cases, "the system" had been a hindrance to the whistleblower more often than a help.

This is a sensible book, which is to say that it puts things like suppression in a political context rather than treating them as some sort of abstraction. Thus Martin notes the large measure of hypocrisy and bad faith in the anti-PC campaign:

"The term 'political correctness' was originally used as a humorous and gentle reminder within the left to beware of becoming too self-righteous about stands on issues such as sexist language or views on certain issues. 'PC' has now become a term by which to attack policies aimed at reducing sexual or ethnic inequalities, among others."

I highly recommend this book. You can order it for \$20 (\$12 for low income) from Fund for Intellectual Dissent, Box U129, Wollongong University, Wollongong 2500. You can also download it free from the internet: <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/>. All proceeds from sales of the book go to the Fund for Intellectual Dissent, which will use them to provide free copies to those who can't afford to buy them, so pay for your copy if you can. ■

Green Left Weekly, 5 March 1997, p. 20

Brian blows the whistle on suppression

Picture: LES SMITH

Academic fights for free speech

By GEOFF FAILES

A Wollongong academic is blowing the whistle on harassment, censorship and suppression of free speech as leader of a national group supporting those who speak out in the public interest.

Associate professor in Science and Technology studies at Wollongong University, Brian Martin, is president of Whistleblowers Australia.

The author of many articles and books in diverse fields, Dr Martin grew up in Oklahoma in the United States and came to Australia in 1969.

He has just published *Suppression Stories*, which describes experiences and insights from more than 20 years of studying and opposing suppression of dissent. His book uses numerous case studies to illustrate suppression and methods of dealing with it.

"Whistleblowers, dissidents and others who run foul of powerful interests are potential targets of attack," Mr Martin said. "They are harassed, ostracised, threatened, reprimanded, transferred, censored and dismissed."

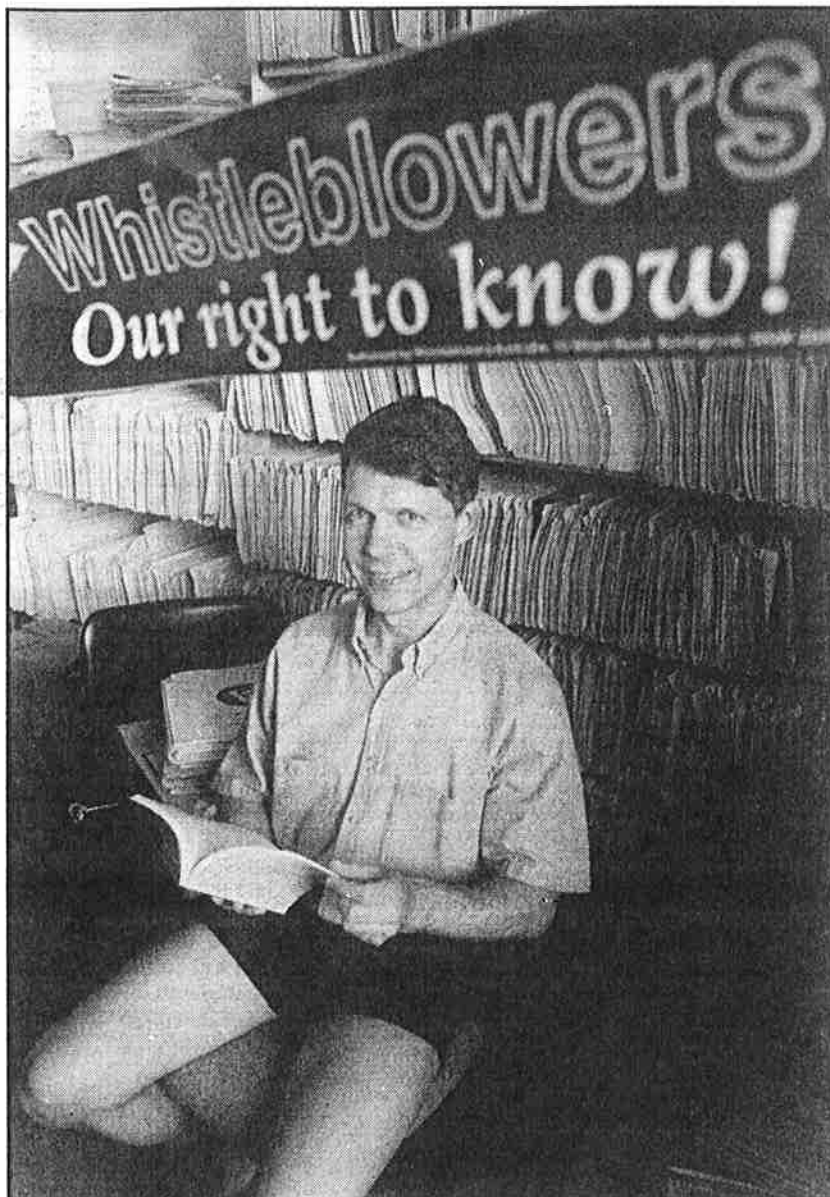
Dr Martin said yesterday that in 1996 there were a number of examples of whistleblowers speaking out in the public interest, including police officers assisting the Wood Royal Commission on corruption.

In a recent article for a Sydney newspaper, Dr Martin also referred to whistleblowers who made allegations about paedophilia within the Foreign Affairs and Trade Department and disciplinary action subsequently taken against an employee.

"The gagging of free speech and the suppression of dissidents goes on all the time, frequently with the object of protecting individual reputations against unwarranted attacks. A few cases receive widespread attention but most are less spectacular," he said.

In his book, Dr Martin offers this advice to potential whistleblowers: "Don't rely on 'experts' to do everything for you, whether they are lawyers, trade union officials, knowledgeable friends or others. By all means seek advice but try to be self-reliant."

Whistleblowers Australia believes Australia's defamation laws are helpful mainly to the rich and



powerful and frequently operate to prevent exposure of corrupt behaviour.

The association said the legal system needed to be reformed to protect those who made public interest disclosures.

There were five whistleblower Acts in Australia, with no conformity between them, in 1996. All had severe flaws and were criticised by whistleblower organisations.

Associate professor Brian Martin, of Wollongong University . . . published a book on whistleblowing.