

Received via email: January 28, 2009

Hi John;

You and I had spoken a few weeks ago when I put you in touch with Clare Backman. When you called, you had said you were looking for clarification on possible expansion plans at Marine Harvest Canada and Clare was able to clarify this for you. It would have been nice to have known the context of your program (a few hours on the topic on salmon farming with quite a bit of focus on my MHC). To understand the true purpose of your call is common courtesy given by most media.

It's my understanding that those persons providing the farm tour to you in the fall of '08 were not made aware that they were being recorded for public radio. It is common courtesy for media to make their intentions known. In addition, by not providing an opportunity for those people to comment on the many (speculative) assertions made by your CAAR interviews in your recent radio show, seems quite unfair and not in good faith.

I respectfully ask the following of you;

1. Please provide signed release forms for images taken by you that show faces of those providing the tour. If you do not have signed forms, then please remove all photos that show those faces. The MHC specific photos that you have used are property of MHC and require authorization from myself for use – please remove these from your website.
2. Can you please provide me with signed release forms granting you permission to use the voices of those participants on your tour. This would include Paula Galloway, Barb Addison, Bill Harrower and Norm Penton. If you are not able to produce signed release forms, then please remove those voices from your podcasts or any other audio productions.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please feel free to call should you have any questions.

Regards,
Ian Roberts
Communications Manager
Marine Harvest Canada

Response sent via email February 2, 2009

Dear Ian,

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you. I'm on the road and not around my computer as much as usual.

I've spoken with the CFWF, and with respect to your concerns, their position reaffirms ours.

You indicated in your email dated January 28 – "It's my understanding that those persons providing the farm tour to you in the fall of '08 were not made aware that they were being recorded for public radio."

This is the comment that perplexed me the most. The CFWF is clearly an organization made up of media and communications professionals working within the agricultural sector. Before departing the bus at the Big Tree Creek Hatchery, our tour guides even commented on how their

comments and position on the subject of aquaculture is just that; their position. The comment was followed-up with an acknowledgement that how we (as media) decide to write about what we learn on the tour is up to us. I have an audio recording of this statement.

My microphone was in plane view throughout the duration of the tours, and I engaged each tour guide with questions with the microphone in plane view. They were always in a position to refrain from answering questions.

I do not consider it a responsibility to have shared my intentions at the time, because quite honestly, I had no intentions other than recording the tours of yours and other aquaculture facilities and sharing those recordings with the general public: That was my role as a journalist.

Throughout the tour however, it was clear that both the Provincial employee, the BCSFA and Marine Harvest, were in a promotional role and thereby presenting only one side of the story. Because there was ample opportunity to present that side of the story, and because some comments seemed questionable, I provided an *equal* opportunity to those who are critical of the sector to comment on the messages we received. The story unfolded from there.

You assert that the approach to producing the shows was “unfair” and “not in good faith”. I don't consider any of our actions to have been unfair and have received ample responses from listeners who were impressed with how “balanced” the shows were. I would even argue that there was a greater emphasis on the industry-proponents side of the story as it was the *proponents* who seemed to present their information as fact, while opponents presented information as you suggest, as “speculative”. Mr. Backman was given the opportunity to respond to this speculation.

As a journalist, I believe it's the responsibility of a business or industry to inquire into the nature of a media question if there is any uncertainty. It should have been clear by the detail of my question sent to you via email that a lot of research had gone into preparing it. If I was in a position of communications within a company, I would have looked into who Jon Steinman and Kootenay Co-op Radio were. Seeing as though I interviewed Mr. Backman on a previous occasion, who I am should not have come as a surprise.

I'm also perplexed by the comment, “To understand the true purpose of your call is common courtesy given by most media.” I am unsure as to what you mean by “true”. The purpose of my initial email to you remains the same now as it did when I first sent it.

Perhaps confusion around this issue on the part of Marine Harvest, is because most media today produce what I would call ‘meaningless soundbites of disinformation’. The recent Global TV segment on the threat of ISA to BC salmon is a great example. I imagine MH and the BC Salmon Farmers Association are quite unhappy with that segment, and I believe you should be. It was poor journalism all around. This is why I “somewhat appreciate” your reaction to our story. Deconstructing Dinner is not only seeking to share an underreported topic with the general public – food politics, but is also seeking to provide substance and critical thought that is all but void within mainstream media today.

With that said, we respectfully do not feel any obligation to act upon your requests.

We are nevertheless more than happy to provide a space for Marine Harvest to share your concerns. This can be done through a letter that we could read on the air and/or post on our web site. Or, this could be done via a phone interview that would have to wait until next week or the week after.

If you would like us to accommodate any of the above options, let me know and we can go from there.

As a last comment regarding your 2 requests, one question that I would have to ask within any future interview (and perhaps this can be clarified by MH in a statement should you choose that option), is why the Communications Manager of a company is in a position to speak on behalf of two employees of an association and one public servant employed by the Province of British Columbia? As a journalist, I believe it's my responsibility to ask; "Is there a relationship (perhaps financial) between Bill Harrower and Marine Harvest Canada that the public should be aware of that encouraged the company to speak on behalf of him?", and; "What should the public think in light of discovering that a Norwegian company is speaking on behalf of a public servant of BC?", and; "Are the other member companies of the BCSFA satisfied that Marine Harvest is speaking on behalf of the trade association that they are also a member of?".

Respectfully,

Jon Steinman
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
Nelson, BC, Canada