

***FREEDONIA***

***A Case Study in Investigative Journalism***

***Teaching Note***

**Alex Norris and Rod MacDonnell**

**Economic Development Institute  
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**FREEDONIA: A Case Study in Investigative Journalism**  
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*Alex Norris and Rod MacDonnell*  
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# FREEDONIA

## Instructors guide

*Note: For lesson planning purposes, numbers on the upper right-hand corner of the beginning of each exercise component (For example, 1 (a), 2 (b), etc.) represent the number of minutes that each component should take.*

Text in capital letters is meant for instructors. Text in upper and lower case is the material that will be handed out to participants.

This exercise is designed to be as interactive as possible. In group discussions, instead of lecturing, try as much as possible to have participants debate among themselves and come up with the best answers to the points being raised. But at the end of each discussion, make sure that, at the very least, the main points of each exercise have been driven home.

This entire exercise is a work in progress. It was conceived and developed by Danish journalist-consultants to the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, and later edited and amended. Instructors using it should feel free to amend, shorten or add to it as they see fit.

### **Lesson 1(a): Five minutes to explain purpose and ground rules for entire “Freedonia” exercise: 5**

- It should be explained to participants that this is a simulation and that some of the exercises will be amusing, but that participants should treat them as though they were all part of a real, unfolding story.
- Participants should also be warned that the entire Freedonia simulation exercise includes traps that journalists commonly fall into. They should be reassured that it is normal to fall into these traps, that by doing so and discovering afterward that they have fallen into these traps, they will learn how to avoid certain common pitfalls of journalism.
- Participants should also be told that in all Freedonia exercises, they should work only with the information they have been given in handouts, during simulated press conferences or during the course of the simulation. (that is, they should not invent information or interviews with officials but, rather, should work only with the information that all groups have been given.) This latter point should be stressed at the beginning of each Freedonia assignment.

### **Lesson 1(b): 15 minutes to introduce hypothetical country and its newspapers. 15**

## **FREEDONIA**

The following story takes place in the country of Freedonia and mainly in Palisades, the capital.

Over the past decade, Freedonians have elected a series of governments which have promised economic and democratic reforms. But the efforts to build a sound base for sustainable socio-economic development and prosperity have been hampered by corruption and domestic instability.

Falling export revenues, poor harvests and mismanagement in the civil service have worsened Freedonia's economic and social problems. During the past two years, however, a process of democratization has gained momentum, catching the attention and appreciation of foreign donors.

Multi-party elections last year resulted in the formation of a coalition government, which apparently enjoys the backing of the business elite.

The government, led by the Liberal Party of Freedonia, LPF, has launched an economic reform program aimed at attracting foreign investors and promoting economic growth.

The government's reform efforts have met strong criticism from the main opposition party in Parliament, the Progress Party of Freedonia, PPF. The PPF advocates a more equal distribution of resources and protection of the rights of the poor and underprivileged.

## **FREEDONIA's Daily Press**

Under the previous regime, all of Freedonia's newspapers were subservient mouthpieces of those in power. Journalists were not permitted to challenge authorities or politicians in the ruling party. When they did, they risked being jailed, tortured or executed.

Today, things have changed for the better. Human-rights abuses have diminished. Occasionally, reporters who anger the regime are still jailed or harassed by authorities, but limits on freedom of expression have eased considerably and a new breed of independent journalists at fiercely independent newspapers has emerged. These papers are quickly drawing readers away from the stuffy, old-style publications that continue to trumpet the government's line.

In the following exercise, participants will join reporting staffs at the following five of Freedonia's most independent and respected newspapers -- fearless publications that are committed to reporting the truth, even when that means challenging the interests of those who hold power.

**THE PALISADES POST**

**THE OBSERVER**

**THE GAZETTE**

**THE GLOBE**

**THE DAILY INQUIRER**

**Lesson 1(c): 5 minutes to hand out “Freedonia 1” sheet and read the press release aloud as students read along.**

5

## **FREEDONIA - 1**

### ***MONDAY MORNING IN THE NEWSROOM.***

A press release has arrived shortly before deadline from the London-based firm Thonka Inc., whose managing director is Mr. Leonard Singer, a native of Freedonia. You have confirmed that this is a genuine press release from the company. It reads:

#### **“PRESS RELEASE: A NEW BEGINNING FOR GREEN PARK”**

Last week in London, Thonka Inc. signed a letter of understanding with Amari Hotels on the financing and construction of a five-star luxury hotel in the Palisades suburb known as Green Park.

A site has now been designated for the hotel, but needs formal approval from Mr. David Suzdal, Minister of Planning. The site formerly served as location for the now defunct Tigers Battalion of Freedonia’s Defense Forces and was recently acquired by Thonka Inc. from Bombay Traders Ltd.

“Our company’s negotiations with the Ministry of Planning are progressing, and we expect the documents of approval to be finalized early next month,” said Mr. Leonard Singer, managing director of Thonka Inc.

“We are happy to announce that this development project is likely to create at least 800 jobs at the construction site. This will make the project the single largest contribution to the development of the tourism industry in Freedonia, and thus will be perfectly in line with the internationally acclaimed priorities of the Government of Freedonia,” Mr. Singer added.

Work will commence immediately. Applicants, mainly masons, bulldozer drivers, concrete workers and carpenters, are kindly requested to turn up at our recruitment office on 14 Willow Street, starting Monday.

**Lesson 1(d): 10 minutes for each participant to perform the following exercise on his own. 10**

*How do you deal with this piece of information?*

*(1) On your own, take 10 minutes to draw up two lists -- one of the newsworthy information in the press release about which you are not in doubt, and a second outlining the things you need to check.*

**Lesson 1(e) 20 minutes to divide into five and perform, in each of the groups, the following exercises. 20**

*(2) Discuss the issue and write a news article including headline, sub-head and the lead paragraph, to be delivered in 20 minutes.*

**Lesson 1(f): 20 minutes for each of four groups to present its headlines, subheads and lead paragraphs, to the plenary, to be written up on blackboard 20**

**Lesson 1(g): 30 minutes, *in plenary*, for critiques, suggestions and defenses of each group's handling of the press release 30**

**Lesson 1(h): 10 minutes, *in plenary*, to list main questions that have arisen and suggest possible sources to answer them 10**

**Main points to reinforce in Lesson 1:**

- (1) Make no assumptions. Report only what you know for sure.
- (2) Attribute. (define attribution for participants)
- (3) Be skeptical. Look for contradictions and inconsistencies. Don't be afraid to put them in your story. It is your story, and you can write it as you wish. You do not have to choose the angle chosen by those who wrote the press release. (a very good lead can be found in the contradiction between "construction begins" and "awaiting approval.")
- (4) Source suggestions and tips:
  - documents (eg: land registry, company registry, newspaper clippings, courthouse)
  - the internet
  - beware of land flips
  - NGOs, labor organizations, human-rights groups,
  - foreign securities commissions
- (5) Always ask yourself: "Who wins? Who loses?" Try to get information from, or about, both winners and losers.

**Lesson 2(a): 10 minutes to present "Freedonia 2"**

**10**

**FREEDONIA - 2**

***TUESDAY MORNING IN THE NEWSROOM.***

You are checking information on the Green Park case. Your editor arrives one hour late. His car was blocked on his way to the office by angry protesters in Green Park. On his arrival, the editor is furious because today's story about the hotel project does not give the full picture.

While in Green Park, the editor saw a handful of armed policemen who had been called to the area to protect two bulldozers parked near the designated construction site. When passing a parked fire engine, the editor's brand new Toyota Corolla was hit by a couple of stones thrown by some of the protesters.

The news meeting starts. The editor complains: "Look at today's papers: "Freedonia tourism in for major boost," "Hotel Project Stalls as Minister Suzdal Drags Feet," "Five Star Hotel for Green Park." Nobody got the real story! Why did you not stress that work starts on Monday? Everybody in Green Park knows that. It is a well known fact. Activists are throwing stones out there!"

One of your colleagues replies: "We had planned to do the follow-up story today. We would focus on the fact that the work is starting before formal approval of the project, as mentioned in the press release."

Your editor: "That will not do. We cannot leave the hard news to our competitors. I want the full story, and I want it now!"

Meanwhile, Thonka Inc. has announced an executive press briefing on the new hotel project at 2 p.m. at Grand Imperial Hotel. Extensive information on the project will be presented. Present will be, among others: Mr. Leonard Singer, managing director of Thonka Inc.; Mr. Paddington Rich, director of development, Amari Hotels; Mr. Jimmy Wong, the hotel company's chief technical director; and a representative of the Ministry of Planning.

**Lesson 2(b): 20 minutes to come up with an action plan in groups, as outlined in instructions below. Instructor should stress that the choices will involve how to allocate limited resources (that is, four reporters and one vehicle) and what main questions need answering, in a limited period of time.**

**20**

*Discuss your journalistic approach to the Green Park case as it develops now. What is your main story? How do you catch up with the competitors? In 20 minutes, come up with a detailed plan of action listing your main priorities and the most important questions you want answered. Who will do what?*

**Lesson 2(c): 15 minutes for groups to present their action plans to the *plenary* (approximately 4 minutes each), with main elements of each put on blackboard 15**

**Lesson 2(d): 10 minutes for plenary debate/discussion on what the top priorities should be, referring to the priorities listed on blackboard. Resource people can add suggestions, where appropriate**

**10**

**Lesson 2(e): 10 minutes for similar debate/discussion on questions and possible sources 10**

**Main point of lesson 2 (a-e):**

Time and resources are limited when covering a breaking story. Not everything can be done. One must ask: “What is the most important information we need now?” “How can we get that information quickly?”

**Lesson 2(f): Instructors simulate press conference, with “Managing Director of Thonka” confirming at some point that “work starts today” and, if asked about lack of permit, saying something like “final details are being worked out and we are confident that the necessary approval will be forthcoming.” Singer should never claim to have government support but should emphasize the support he has received from the official. Cocktails, snacks and transport should be offered to reporters by the company. Technical director should have a list of “facts” about the project (that is, 27 presidential suites, 18-hole championship golf course, 140-hectare development, one Olympic swimming pool, at least 800 jobs, \$100 million investment, 26 floors, etc.) so that a check can be made for accuracy in subsequent assignments. If participants raise questions about respect for environmental norms, they should be told that Amari hotels has done its own environmental impact assessment and that its project got top marks in that assessment.**

**45**

**Main points of Lesson 2(f):**

- (1) Take notes
- (2) Don't rely on handouts; the best, most revealing information (at press conferences or anywhere) usually isn't pre-packaged
- (3) Ask clear, concise questions. Don't make speeches, and don't make accusations, when asking a question. Avoid double-barreled questions.
- (4) Don't get distracted by dramatic “red herrings”; figure out what's really important and focus on that.
- (5) If someone identifies himself as an “official” in a ministry, get his precise title.
- (6) What's wrong with a company doing an environmental impact assessment on its own project? Be alert to conflicts of interest.

**Lesson 3(a): 10 minutes to present “Freedonia-3,” below:**

**10**

### **FREEDONIA - 3**

***LATER IN THE NEWSROOM, AFTER THE THONKA PRESS CONFERENCE. ONE HOUR BEFORE DEADLINE.***

The newspaper’s driver returns from his brother’s well-known restaurant, Green Park Paradise, with somosas and other snacks for the reporters. He tells them he has spotted small bonfires in the crowded alleys of Green Park, and that the demonstrators are getting more and more agitated.

Half an hour later, the phone rings. A man on the phone says that he is a Green Park resident, but refuses to give his name. His message is the following:

“Things are getting out of control. Fighting has erupted in the streets. The policemen have gone mad, because one of their colleagues has been killed in Green Park. They have called in reinforcements and have started to clear the area near the Paradise restaurant. People have been arrested and taken away -- even children, including my niece, and she is only eleven!”

**Lesson 3(b): 5 minutes to come up with an action plan, in groups, as outlined in instructions below.**

**5**

*What to do now? Immediate decisions are needed. Your readers expect to be informed. Discuss five minutes and decide what goes into the main Green Park story in tomorrow’s paper. (Take notes).*

**Lesson 3(c): 10 minutes to draw up list, in plenary, of the four groups’ action plans. No critique.**

**10**

(NB: This list should be left on blackboard through subsequent ethical debate in “Freedonia-5” and introduction of “Freedonia-6,” when errors of judgment, if any, will become apparent).

#### **Main points of Lesson 3:**

- (1) Quick decisions must be made and priorities decided upon when a story is breaking.
- (2) How do you know what you think you know? Don’t jump to conclusions based on unreliable evidence.

**Lesson 4(a): One minute for instructor to present this scenario to plenary: 1**

**FREEDONIA - 4**

Reporters who call the police station get the following response:

“We cannot assist you because we have no transportation. Would it be possible for you to come and pick us up?”

**Lesson 4(b): 10 minutes to debate what to do, *in plenary*. 10**

**Main points of lesson 4(a-b):**

- (1) It can be problematic to cooperate too closely with sources, especially those who wield power.
- (2) You need to decide ahead of time where you will draw the line on questions of ethics.

**Lesson 4(c): 30 minutes budgeted to perform "20-minute" exercise, below, in groups 30**

*Time is running. Deadline is approaching. Write the full story, including the headline and sub-head. You now have 20 minutes to deadline.*

**Lesson 4(d): 5 minutes for spokesman of each group to read out headline and story, with facilitator noting main points on blackboard. 20**

**Lesson 4(e): Discussion to follow: 15 minutes for each story, *in plenary*, with critiques and defenses by participants and facilitators. 60**

**Main points to raise in discussion:**

- (1) Always take extensive notes. be able to back up what you report. you might be sued.
- (2) Don't let decision-makers or those in positions of power mislead you or dodge essential questions about how they exercise power.
- (3) Look for contradictions: for example, if the project hasn't been approved, why is the government official present at the news conference?
- (4) You, not those holding the news conference, are the boss. you decide what the story is -- not them. Skepticism is always healthy.
- (5) Don't get distracted by the mood of the press conference. Think about the broader public interest. What does the public want most to know about? How well the press got along with the Thonka Inc. representative? or What is going to happen to their community?

**Lesson 5(a): Take 5 minutes to read out the following scenario to students, as they read along.** **5**

### **FREEDONIA - 5**

#### ***WEDNESDAY MORNING IN THE NEWSROOM.***

The reporter who was in Green Park yesterday evening and stayed until past midnight delivers an account of his observations:

The parents of some of the children who were taken away told him that they were very grateful to the police for protecting the children by moving them from the clashes. “Not a single arrest was made,” the reporter tells you. The children were safely returned to their families while the protesters withdrew from the streets during the evening. The area was quiet around midnight. Nobody was injured, except a young girl who was hit and seriously injured by a black luxury car. The driver had fled the scene of the accident.

Another reporter has called the police. The message on the telephone answering machine is as follows:

“Until 4 p.m. today, no assistance from this office is available because all our staff will be attending the memorial service of a colleague who died tragically yesterday in Green Park.”

A third reporter has called the town hall and talked to the mayor’s secretary. She told him the mayor will issue a statement at 4 p.m.

**Lesson 5(b): Take 10 minutes, in groups, to come up with action plan. How will you allocate limited resources throughout the day?** **10**

*Discuss how you plan to follow up on the Green Park case. Present your plan of action in 10 minutes.*

**Lesson 5(c): take 15 minutes, in plenary, to outline each group’s approach on the blackboard.** **15**

#### **Main point of Lesson 5:**

Different kinds of information have different values. An eyewitness account from a reporter on the scene is a very valuable kind of information. An unconfirmed rumor from one anonymous voice over the telephone is practically worthless. Don’t believe what you hear second-hand; believe what you see with your own eyes.

**Lesson 6 (a) take 10 minutes to read out scenario below, as students read along: 10**

### **FREEDONIA - 6**

#### ***5 P.M. IN THE NEWSROOM***

Radio Freedonia has just broadcast a speech made by Mr. Peter Lusso, the chief of police, at the memorial service of the deceased policeman. He fiercely attacks the media for their reporting on the unrest in Green Park, describing the reports as “a complete distortion of facts.”

He quotes selected paragraphs from today’s papers: “Policeman killed by riotous crowd,” “Policemen go mad,” “Unconfirmed reports say policeman killed,” “Fighting in streets as police rampage,” “Cop killed in Green Park disturbances.”

Mr. Lusso continues: “This is a disgrace to the nation and a personal agony to the family and friends of a respected and beloved colleague. While we are gathered here in common grief, the public has been presented with a distorted picture of yesterday’s unfortunate events. The police had complete control of the situation in Green Park. There was no violence. Our respected colleague, Sam Lujak, died of a sudden and unprovoked heart attack. Why do the national media resort to such practices of irresponsible, tabloid slandering by publishing what they refer to as “unconfirmed reports” about a killing that never took place?”

End of broadcast. A few minutes later, Freedonia’s News Agency sends out Mr. Lusso’s speech word by word.

Meanwhile, Palisades’s mayor, Mr. Michael Cramer, has completed his press conference at the Town Hall. His message is the following:

**Lesson 6(b): 15 minutes to *simulate press conference*, with "Mayor Cramer" reading the following message, and taking questions from journalists, *in plenary*, afterwards: 15**

An attractive piece of land in the district of Flora, 20 kilometers south of Palisades, has been designated to be given to the Green Park squatters. They are free to move out there immediately. Each family will be given a fertile plot of land there and a sum of money. Otherwise, families will be offered an apartment elsewhere in the city. Which ever they choose, these families will be enabled to join Freedonia’s transformation to a prosperous democratic society.

Regarding the hotel project, the plans will continue. Work will start on Monday, and will provide at least 1100 jobs for the community.

NB: If pressed for details about the land, the mayor should be vague and offer nothing concrete. (That is, “A plan is being developed,” “We’re confident that all remaining kinks are being worked out now,” “I’m unable to provide you with that kind of detail at this time,” etc.)

**Lesson 6(c): Divide into groups and take 20 minutes to perform following exercise**  
**20**

*Call a news meeting and discuss possible follow-up stories for tomorrow's edition. Write the frame of your main story (headline, sub-head and lead) in 20 minutes.*

**Lesson 6(d): 15 minutes, in plenary, for four groups to present their approaches, with main elements of each put up on blackboard**  
**15**

**Lesson 6(e): 20 minutes, in plenary, for four approaches to be critiqued and defended (five minutes for each approach)** **20**

**Main points of lesson:**

- (1) It can be dangerous to make assumptions. Everything must be checked before it is reported as fact, or even as “unconfirmed reports.” Your reputation, and that of your colleagues, is on the line.
- (2) People in power who are threatened by good, aggressive reporting will seize on any flaws or errors in a story to divert critical attention from themselves and redirect it to the news media.
- (3) Beware of “spin control” and “damage control.” It is a common tactic for politicians under the gun to hold press conferences late in the day so as to manufacture new “news” that makes the headline.
- (4) Attribute. Just because Mayor Cramer says land has been designated doesn't make it so.
- (5) When an initiative is announced, ask for details about it. Did anyone ask the mayor where, precisely, the land is? Where these apartments are located? Has they been purchased? Who is there now?
- (6) Sometimes, when you don't get a satisfactory answer to an essential question, it is appropriate to point to this in your story. (that is, “declined to answer,” “Was unable to say, however,” etc.)
- (7) Always, always, always take notes!

**Lesson 7(a): take 15 minutes to read out the following scenario, as participants read along.**

15

### **FREEDONIA - 7**

#### ***THURSDAY MORNING IN THE NEWSROOM.***

Your reporter has just returned from police headquarters, where she had a long meeting with the police chief. The police now consider the unrest in Green Park a closed matter. On the mayor's request, police have agreed to assist in the relocation of the Green Park squatters to Flora, on the condition that the start of the hotel construction work is postponed at least one week.

The parties involved -- the mayor, Thonka Inc. and the Ministry of Planning -- have agreed that the relocation of the squatters should be conducted in an orderly manner that is acceptable to the community. Regarding the deceased policeman, his relatives have authorized the police chief to release a medical statement from the family's doctor. It says that Sam Lujak suffered from heart disturbances and was undergoing medical treatment at the time of his death.

The reporter has also been informed about the traffic accident, in which a black luxury car made off after hitting a young girl. After a thorough investigation of the case, police were able to identify the driver and passengers in the car. The driver was Miss Divine Lovejoy, who won the Miss Freedonia Beauty Contest of 1989. She is currently employed as hostess at the "Sexy London Club," Palisades's jet-set night club. On the back seat was Mr. Teddy Cramer, the eldest son of Palisades's mayor, and Miss Diana Wildlife.

The two young ladies had explained that after having a few drinks in the bar, Mr. Cramer had decided not to drive and handed over the car keys to Miss Lovejoy. The party left "Sexy London Club" in the black Mercedes owned by Mr. Cramer's father just after midnight.

According to the two ladies' accounts to investigators, Mr. Cramer had fallen asleep on their way to Miss Lovejoy's home. In a dark, crowded street in Green Park, something hit the car. They believed it to be a stone or a piece of wood thrown by the protesters and left without checking what had happened. After being questioned, the three were released. According to police, they expressed deep regrets for having unwittingly caused the injuries to the young girl, and said they are prepared to offer her financial compensation. Police consider the case closed.

The driver arrives unexpectedly at the editorial meeting. He has the following message:

"Somebody I know has acquired a complete survey of the expanded hotel construction plans, including the list of contractors. We can get that list - on two conditions: secrecy about the source of information, and 100 dollars in small notes to be delivered in an envelope. I have been instructed to pass the money on to the source."

**Lesson 7(b): Take 15 minutes, in groups, to develop action plan and ponder ethical question, as outlined below: 15**

*How do you act on these various pieces of information? What line of action will you pursue? And first of all: How do you respond to the driver's message? Discuss the issue and present a plan in 15 minutes.*

**Lesson 7(c): 15 minutes. Each group presents approach to plenary. It goes up on the blackboard. 15**

**Lesson 7(d): 20 minutes for critiques and defenses of each group's approach. (five minutes per group) 20**

**Main points of lesson 7 (a-d):**

- (1) Cross-check all documents. Did the family really authorize this? Did the doctor really come to this conclusion? Or are the police just trying to diffuse a tense situation?
- (2) Is there more than one story here? Might the two stories be linked?
- (3) Don't let lurid details distract you from the public interest.

**Lesson 7(e): Conduct brief ethical debate about check-book journalism in plenary. 10 minutes. 10**

**Main point of lesson 7(e):**

Paying for information is dangerous. People may be tempted to exaggerate or fabricate if they think they can make money by doing so.

**Lesson 8(a): Take 5 minutes to present the following scenario, as participants read along.**  
**5**

**FREEDONIA - 8**

***ONE HOUR LATER.***

Your editor arrives. He hears about the driver's offer and becomes furious. By no means will the editor accept to pay for the list. That would be against editorial policy. The driver is sacked immediately.

Before leaving the premises, the driver tells one of your colleagues in a low voice:

“You can get the document for free if you buy me lunch. Meet me at the Green Park Paradise in half an hour.”

**Lesson 8 (b)**

**10**

*What is your next move?*

Discuss, in plenary, for 10 minutes.

**Main point of Lesson 8:**

There are dangers to “check-book journalism,” but it may be wise not to draw limits that are too strict. Sharing a meal with someone can sometimes get them to open up. It's better, however, to have your own company pay than to accept hospitality from someone who may want favorable coverage in return. All of this is, in large part, a cultural question, however, and there's no clearly right or wrong answer in this situation.

**9(a): Two minutes to distribute and read out the following scenario:**

**2**

**FREEDONIA - 9**

***LUNCH TIME AT THE GREEN PARK PARADISE.***

The reporter meets the sacked driver, who tells him:

“You can get the document if you buy me lunch and never reveal where you got it.”

*What do you do?*

**10-minute discussion**

**10**

**Main points of 9(a):**

- (1) Your word is precious currency as a journalist. If you promise not to reveal a source’s identity, you have to be willing to keep that promise, even if, in an extreme case, that means going to jail. So, don’t make promises you are not prepared to keep.
- (2) You should be prepared to negotiate, in such situations, precisely who will and who will not know who the source is. For instance, will your editor have to be told? And can your editor be trusted?
- (3) It’s always best to try first to get a reluctant source to go on the record, name and all. If that fails, try to get the source to agree to be identified in as precise terms as possible. That is, “a senior mines department official familiar with the project” is better than “a government official.”
- (4) When using sources in this way, you must be sure to authenticate them independently. That is, make sure you’ve found out, on your own, that they are who they say they are.

*You are now expected to have gathered enough information to give your readers an overall insight into the Green Park affair. Have you done your best?*

**Lesson 10 (a): Two minutes to pass out and read out the following exercise: 2**

**FREEDONIA - 10**

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: The document shows that the hotel project has been expanded and now includes a country club with a huge golf course. The driver's brother (the owner of the Green Park Paradise) had been negotiating the contract to run the restaurant in the Country Club, but that contract has now been given to Mr. Highlife - the son of your editor!

**10(b): 10 minutes, *in plenary*, to discuss what to do.**

*Consider your next move - and tell us!* 10 minutes **10**

**Main points of Lesson 10:**

- (1) Be sure you understand fully the motives of any source who provides you with confidential information or documents.
- (2) Always independently verify the authenticity of a document you have been handed by a confidential source, especially when that source is a third party. You don't want to be duped.
- (3) Develop strategies to get around the vested interests of your bosses. If you are willing to take the risk, the public interest can best be served if you are willing to challenge your own boss. But if you do that, it's a good idea to line up allies. Some journalists who participated in earlier seminars said they have quietly passed information they have gathered on to trusted colleagues at rival media outlets when they were certain their own Bosses wouldn't publish the information themselves.

**Lesson 11(a): Two minutes hand out sheet and read it to participants. 2**

### **FREEDONIA - 11**

#### ***THURSDAY AFTERNOON IN THE NEWSROOM.***

The editor has unexpectedly left the office. Your sub-editor enters and says: “We are losing readers and our competitive edge. I want better and more interesting stories on the Green Park affair.”

**Lesson 11(b): 60 minutes to perform following exercise 60**

*Divide your group into two teams.*

*One team writes:*

*(A) One sheet for the front page - your main story, including headline, sub-heading, introduction and the crux of the story.*

*The other team writes:*

*(B) A maximum of two sheets for the feature section, giving the readers a full insight into the recent events, including headline, sub-heading, introduction and a comprehensive story.*

*Deadline: 60 minutes from now.*

*Please note: On Saturday, a team of prominent media people and officials from Freedonia will present the coveted*

*"FREEDONIA EDITORIAL TEAM OF THE YEAR" award.*

*The presentation will take place at a grand ceremony at Singer Hall, Colline Hotel at 12:30 pm (London time).*

*The press is cordially invited to witness this event (off the record). A delicious farewell lunch will be served.*

**Lesson 11(c): 90 minutes, the following morning, for copies of each group’s effort to be handed out to all participants, with a representative from each group reading out the first few paragraphs of each story followed by a critique, in plenary. “Praise?” “Criticism?”**

**90**

#### **Main points of Lesson 11:**

- (1) In stories like this one, try to emphasize public interest angles, rather than simply focusing on lurid, sensational detail. Hold public officials accountable. That is, always ask

yourself: “What, according to the law, are the duties and responsibilities of the relevant public officials in this instance, and are they exercising those responsibilities properly?”

- (2) Always, always, always take notes!
- (3) In researching a story like this, look for contradictions and explore them fully. And once you’ve got information about such contradictions, exploit that information high up in your story. (That is, “Construction starts immediately” vs. “Approval forthcoming”)
- (4) Show, don’t tell.  
Show the reader what you’ve found out, instead of telling the reader your own opinions about a story. This is much more effective, because it allows the reader to think he’s come to his own conclusions, instead of feeling he’s being preached at. As a journalist, you’re already playing a big role in shaping the story simply by juxtaposing the various bits of information you have gathered. And if you put that information together effectively, the reader will get the picture without having to be preached at.
- (5) Write only what you know for sure.