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May 18, 2003

The Globe and Mail  
Letters to the Editor  
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In today's climate, with the accuracy of newspaper reporting "under a magnifying glass" Kirk Makin should have checked his facts *before* he wrote his one-sided article (Globe and Mail, May 17, 2003, "Charges against two nurses collapse").

Had Makin gone to the Globe's archives or done some internet research on the websites of the Globe's competitors, he would not have repeated Elizabeth McIntyre's unfounded assertion that "The inquest was hijacked by private interests". In fact, the inquest was presided over by Deputy-Chief Coroner Dr. James Cairns, a public official of unquestioned integrity.

Dr. Cairns is a provincial appointee, as was his counsel Margaret Browne. The jurors were picked at random with no "private input". The jury forewoman said "The homicide verdict was not given for its shock value." She went on to say "The finding of homicide was reached after very careful consideration of the evidence..." and "with conscience" (Toronto Star, Feb. 27, 2000).

The Hospital for Sick Children and its nurses were represented by a blue-chip law firm – the best money could buy. As such, an analysis of the facts destroys McIntyre's assertion. The failure to do basic research is an egregious error on Makin's part. Fairness and adherence to the most obvious of journalistic principles – speak to all parties and get your facts straight – would have led to a more balanced and accurate story.

Makin might have found out, for example, that the hospital's lawyer was asked by Dr. Cairns on at least two occasions to consider advising the nurses to obtain separate and independent lawyers. The inquest was adjourned for three days in January 2000 to permit him to do so. He and the nurses declined Dr. Cairns's suggestion – as was their right. To suggest now that this was somehow a "hijacking" is grossly inaccurate.

These nurses were not "conscientious" the night that Lisa died – which is all the inquest and the criminal charges were concerned with. If a law-abiding citizen robs a liquor store, is it a defence to a criminal charge that he was a saintly and compassionate

man? Surely the laying of charges is appropriate and it is for the criminal justice system to determine whether there is criminal culpability.

The inquest and the criminal charges were not designed to be an examination of general nursing ethics, standards of performance, or commitment of nurses to their jobs. The overwhelming majority of nurses adhere to the highest ethical, moral and professional standards and should be commended for their honesty and integrity. To somehow equate criticism of Doerksen and Soriano to a frontal attack on the nursing profession is perverse and inaccurate. These two nurses should not be nominated for Florence Nightingale awards for their actions on October 21-22, 1998. That is what the inquest and the criminal charges were all about. I deny that I was a “major force behind the criminal charges” – nor was Sharon Shore. Even in the free marketplace of ideas, there are boundaries – boundaries of accuracy – as the New York Times recently discovered.

A close examination of the facts would lead any neutral observer to the inescapable conclusion that the police and the Crown were far more conscientious than Doerksen and Soriano were the night they “treated” Lisa. Makin’s article suggests otherwise. That, too, is very unfortunate.

As a highly experienced writer, Makin should know better. So should our national newspaper. The Toronto Star, the National Post, and the Toronto Sun gave balanced accounts. The Globe and Mail wasn’t even close. Shame on you.

Yours truly,

Frank K. Gomberg