

RELEASE IN PART B6

the blog I mentioned

From: Lissa Muscatine

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Subject: the blog I mentioned

Great to see you today. It was nice to see AMS depart on such a high note. As promised, here is the blog I wrote, which probably doesn't say anything you haven't thought about. But there are couple of anecdotes that may be worth using some time. I've touched based with Alec and Meg (she is the lead pen) and will be happy to be a sounding board for them on the speech. xo

Are WikiLeaks Today's Pentagon Papers? An Interview with Ben Bagdikian Explains the Differences

By LISSA MUSCATINE | Published: DECEMBER 29, 2010

In the past few weeks, celebrities from Michael Moore to Bianca Jagger have jumped on the WikiLeaks bandwagon, aided by some surprising assertions. Among those is the reflexive equation of WikiLeaks and the Pentagon Papers, and of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and military analyst Daniel Ellsberg.

Ellsberg himself has defended WikiLeaks over the past year, saying the attacks against the organization and Assange are precisely those that he was subjected to when he copied and circulated secret government documents to the American media in the early 1970s. He says that the actions of Assange, and Army private Bradley Manning, the alleged source of a massive cache of cables from the State Department, should be respected as necessary to countering excessive government secrecy and to keeping the public informed.

While Ellsberg's fears about the dangers of government misinformation and secrets are warranted, it's harder to understand his — and a slew of famous celebrities' — suggestions that WikiLeaks and the Pentagon Papers represent comparable efforts to protect the free flow of information on behalf of our democratic liberties. To understand the serious distinctions between the two cases, I sat down recently with Ben Bagdikian, the national editor of The Washington Post during the Pentagon Papers and a central player in the newspaper's decision to publish the documents in June 1971 over the government's objections. (The New York Times had begun to publish the documents but was under court order to stop. A later court ruling sided with the

newspapers). A widely admired reporter, editor, and author, Bagdikian later became dean of the journalism school at the University of California at Berkeley. Now 90 and still living in Berkeley, he remains a respected arbiter of journalistic ethics, and a sage voice on issues relating to freedom of information and the role of the press in a democratic society.

The principle difference between WikiLeaks and the Pentagon Papers, according to Bagdikian, is that the Pentagon Papers were "informed disclosures." They were "selective" and "serious." The operation was conducted "by people who themselves were experts on government and had, in some cases, created these secret documents through their appointments by the government."

Ellsberg, a former Marine who had worked at the Defense and State Departments, including a stint as a civilian in Vietnam, became increasingly disenchanted by the degree of government misinformation about the war. He had been deeply involved in government policy on Indochina and knew intimately the details of the secret report on Vietnam ordered by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara in the late 1960s. And he had particular clarity about how the contents of the report contradicted public pronouncements about the war by a succession of American presidents. As an analyst at the Rand Corporation, he was one of a handful of people in and out of government who had access to the Pentagon's final report. Fed up with the government's lies and the extent of government secrecy about its tactics and actions in Vietnam, he decided to photocopy the documents and distribute them to the press in early 1971, after unsuccessfully attempting to get anti-war senators to read the papers on the Senate floor.

But even Ellsberg understood the need for some government secrecy – a point he has made in talking about WikiLeaks. He withheld about one-third of what became known as the Pentagon Papers – roughly 3,000 documents that he feared "would do harm and delved too far into the government's operations," Bagdikian recalled.

Bagdikian says that, by contrast, WikiLeaks "emptied the whole bucket of government information more or less indiscriminately and, despite what they say, released things that went down to bedrock international relations and internal relations of the government...WikiLeaks was an indiscriminate and unfocused release of these things."

While Manning reportedly claims that, like Ellsberg, he was motivated by his objection to government misinformation about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, his understanding of these events could not have been comparable to Ellsberg's knowledge of Vietnam as a consummate and high-level insider. And given the volume of cables Manning purportedly provided to WikiLeaks – around 250,000 – it is hard to imagine that a twenty-something Army private had the experience or know-how to appreciate which documents should or should not have been kept secret. Manning, Assange, and WikiLeaks seem to think that any and all government documents should be made public and that there is no diplomatic or internal government reason for keeping any information secret.

Bagdikian appreciates the need to keep the public informed about the government's actions, as his decision to publish the Pentagon Papers reflects. And while he has a journalist's natural skepticism about government and its potential for abusing power, he also believes that national security has to be considered, and safeguarded, when documents are being released. In

fact, he remembers meeting in a dingy motel in Boston to receive the Pentagon Papers. "I spent hours cutting out [government coded cable numbers] on the papers" that could potentially be deciphered by foreign governments if they were made public, he said.

Bagdikian says that there is no clear line between a responsible and selective disclosure of documents, as occurred with the Pentagon Papers, and a massive and indiscriminate "dump" like WikiLeaks. That's because government secrecy, while necessary, is inherently incompatible with democratic freedoms. So as government secrecy expands, he says, so will attempts to limit it.

"In modern democracies, much of what governments do is secret...It's obvious that in this real world the government has to keep some things secret," Bagdikian says. But "democracies depend on people being informed about the leaders they choose," and as government secrecy grows, there is "a trigger point at which something gets disclosed outside of government." The person or group disclosing secrets may be informed and selective, he says, or not.

"It's an insoluble problem," says Bagdikian. "There is no answer except to say that you hope when people disclose things they recognize the consequences."

Lissa Muscatine has spent her professional career in government, politics, and journalism, serving most recently at the State Department as Director of Speechwriting and Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State.