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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: 'Libel'

From: **Bob Rickard** <[rickard@forteantimes.com](mailto:rickard@forteantimes.com)>  
Date: Mon, 10 Mar 97 13:38:38 -0000  
Fwd Date: Mon, 10 Mar 1997 12:45:49 -0500  
Subject: Re: 'Libel'

Bob Rickard responding to ...

>Date: Sun, 09 Mar 1997 18:59:44 -0400  
>From: Stanton Friedman <[fsphys@brunnet.net](mailto:fsphys@brunnet.net)>  
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
>Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: 'Libel'

Boy, Stan, you don't take criticism very well but you love to dish it.

>I can understand that writers Peter Brookesmith and Andy Roberts and  
>Fortean Times editor Rickard are angry at Harry and me. The notion that  
>because not all read the MEN means it doesn't matter if someone is  
>libelled there, surely is ridiculous.

\* I am not angry with Stan, never have been, as I don't take any of this personally. (the others can speak for themselves).

Nor did I say that libelling someone or defaming them "didn't matter". Of course it does. And I certainly never implied that the 'offense' "didn't matter" simply because the MEN is a parochial newspaper. I was asking what I thought was a reasonable question, which was, how a defamatory statement in a local paper could affect Stan's ability to earn, as this is what the claim (and damages?) would be assessed on in English law.

No, I wasn't angry, but disappointed, maybe, at using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Like many people in the UK, I was taken aback by the suddenness and intensity of Stan's suit against Jenny, which might well be familiar in the US but which seemed rather excessive, over here. One has to ask whether a calm discussion before hand might have obviated the need for a legal mugging.

Stan then referred to the Oxford Union debate as supplying hints at why I might be actively 'against' him.

>A key event which may explain the false claims currently being made was  
>the debate at the Oxford University Debating Society in October 1995.  
>The Topic " This house believes that intelligent alien Life has visited  
>the planet Earth".

..... >8 snip 8< .....

>Rickard for whom Peter had written much, had commissioned an article for  
>Fortean Times about the debate, but then refused to run it. I suppose  
>he expected that Peter would be triumphant over this nasty lawyer and  
>this upstart Canadian American physicist who comes on so strongly pro ET  
>and had the gall to sue the UK's "only professional ufologist" (Jenny)  
>and research director for Bufora at that.

\* the descriptors "nasty" and "upstart" are Stan's, not mine. I don't know Harris or his motives and wouldn't presume to call anyone nasty, unless it was from personal experience. I \*know\* Stan is no upstart, having been around a long time. Being "pro-ET" is not an issue, anyway Stan is quite entitled to his view, as are others theirs. "Gall"? See above.

It not true that I commissioned a report on the debate. One was offered to me by someone who was attending and I accepted. When the report was turned in, it was, to my disappointment, long-winded and ultimately not very interesting. It even omitted some of the important points discussed, that I had learned about in subsequent conversations with both Stan and Peter. There were three other factors I had to consider: we were then on a bimonthly schedule and the report would be past its sell-by date (this would not be a problem if the report was interesting); the accompanying photos were poor; and I learned that the author and photographs were also submitted to the Birdsall's magazine. At Fortean Times, not only is space always at a premium, we have a policy of not accepting multiple submissions. I rejected the report on these grounds only ... although psychic Stan appears to know differently.

Stan concludes it was rejected as part of a campaign against him but he is quite wrong. He is also ridiculously presumptuous is saying I gambled on the outcome of the debate. I simply don't work that way. To me, the fact that the subject was being debated was the story, not the personalities on either side. And if Stan thinks Peter is a favoured writer, he should ask Peter directly about how he has suffered at my hands.

Bob Rickard - editor  
rickard@forteantimes.com

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\*Where the extraordinary is just another day at the office\*  
"Metaphysical speculations are attempts to think unthinkably,  
and it is quite hard enough to think thinkably." C.Fort

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