

## COLLISION COURSE

### How Science is abused by the Media

Prof. Brian J Ford

CSAR Member of Council; NESTA Fellow, and Fellow of Cardiff University

7.30 p.m., Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2006

The Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Churchill College, Storey's Way, Cambridge

### Brian J Ford writes:

We are surrounded by science, and influenced by it every day; yet the coverage of science by the media is scandalous. News reports are misleading or incomplete, and major broadcasters (like the BBC) regularly get science wrong. Tonight we will meet some almost unbelievable examples of poor science reporting in newspapers and on the air.

But it isn't only the fault of the media. Scientists regularly exaggerate their work, just to claim headlines. Today's textbooks contain numerous mistakes, and it's not as easy as you might think to have them put right. The end result is that science is being given a poor deal.

### About the Speaker:

Brian launched his weekly programme Science Now for the BBC at a time when there was no science programme on Radio Four, and went on to present

"Where Are You Taking Us?" (on radio), "Food For Thought" and "Computer Challenge" (on television). Currently he appears on television programmes about the Great Dictators, secret science in WW2, and as presenter of The Man behind the Da Vinci Code.

He will include some examples from the press and broadcasting in tonight's presentation, and we'll see some really bad examples of science reporting from

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the Today programme on Radio Four. And there will be some remarkable examples of how the scientists get it wrong, too!

### **The Organising Secretary adds.....**

Brian, of course, needs no introduction. He is a long-standing member of the CSAR Council, a broadcaster and polymath who has devoted his life to the communication of science to the non-scientific community.

I'm for a **Vote of Thanks** for Brian's lecture; and a **Chair-person** too!

Please contact me ([richard.freeman@genericsgroup.com](mailto:richard.freeman@genericsgroup.com) or by leaving a message on 01799 5325 948) if you would like to volunteer (make sure I have your contact details).

It has been suggested that I recruit Chairs and VoTs to a greater extent from amongst our membership – so here's your chance!

You should receive our Year Card for 2006/7 with this flyer. You will, I am sure, notice a non-deliberate error in the years following the three terms! Interestingly, this error escaped all proof-reading by my fellow CSAR Council members, but it was detected by my secretary; I then failed to properly correct it!

It would cost ~£350 to reprint, which would be a waste of CSAR funds.

So I have to ask you to live with my senior moment on this occasion! I am, however, willing to **personally** alter by hand your programme, if you present it to me at one of our lectures!

Here's hoping for an excellent year!

Best Regards

Richard Freeman  
CSAR Organising Secretary

**Coffee available**, as usual, in the foyer outside the lecture theatre from ~7.00 p.m.