



# **Bad News: The Decline of Reporting, the Business of News, and the Danger to Us All**

*Tom Fenton*

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In his long journalistic experience as the senior European correspondent for CBS News, Tom Fenton has reported on everything from the fall of the Shah of Iran to the movements of al Qaeda throughout Europe -- a story he was tracking before 9/11. And in the three years since that fateful day, he has come to a sobering realization: Our once-noble news media -- and network TV news in particular -- have abdicated their responsibility to the American people, and endangered us in the process.

As Fenton points out, much of the United States still depends on the networks for most of its information about the world. But after the fall of the Soviet Union, the networks gutted their news-gathering operations -- just as the old Cold War status quo was shattering -- leaving behind an unstable and violent new world order. Once a public service, the network news was commandeered by its corporate parents as a cash cow. In-depth reporting on critical issues was replaced with saturation coverage of sensationalistic crime stories and simpleminded "news you can use." Even as genocide spread through Africa -- and Islamic terror festered in the Middle East -- international reporting disappeared almost entirely from the airwaves. And Americans were left uninformed, unable to judge the accuracy of politically biased stories (on both sides of the spectrum), and utterly unprepared for the war on terror about to descend on their doorstep.

In **Bad News**, Tom Fenton offers a fiery indictment of just how far "the news" has fallen. As a frequent voice in the wilderness himself -- who fought in vain to interest CBS in an Osama bin Laden interview in the 1990s -- Fenton reveals a news-gathering environment gutted by corporate bottom-lining bottom-feeders, staffed by dilatory producers and executives (who dismissed important stories as depressing or obscure), and dangerously dependent on images and information gathered by third-party sources. In hard-hitting interviews with Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, and Tom Brokaw, he exposes how even the anchors themselves believed they were outlandishly compensated -- while quality coverage was being slashed. And he charges that the news media must lose its entertainment-industry mindset and reestablish its role as a keeper of the public trust.

"This is not just a book," writes Fenton. "This is the beginning of a campaign to galvanize America. We need more and better news. Our lives depend on it."

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