

# TRANSLATION News

No. 3

## FORMER CHRONICLE EDITOR LASHES OUT AT ATA BOARD

Washington.- In a letter published in the "Capital Translator", newsletter of ATA's National Capital Area Chapter, former ATA Chronicle editor Ted Crump accused the ATA Board of engaging in censorship by failing to disclose certain facts to the organization's membership. Mr. Crump also revealed that ATA had incurred legal fees of \$16,344.25 between September 1, 1989, and March 25, 1990, and stated that the figure stood at approximately \$22,000 as of May 7, 1990. It was learned by TRANSLATION NEWS that those figures were obtained from ATA Treasurer Bonnie Carson with the assistance of Board member John Bukacek. A source close to the Board revealed that the figure cited by Mr. Crump was more or less accurate, but added that well over half of it was spent for work involving the application and related documents filed with the IRS for converting the Association into a non-profit corporation.

Mr. Crump also pointedly criticized the Board for caving in to the pressure allegedly exerted by three ATA corporate member translation companies to have the Association terminate the Rate Guidelines program because of anti-trust considerations. Mr. Crump took the Board to task for failing to get a "second opinion" on the question, and characterized the Board's action as "a black day for freelancers".

Crump, who had also served as a member of the ATA Board in the mid-1980's, was summarily dismissed from his position as editor of the ATA Chronicle in October 1989, one month before his term was to expire. The reasons for Mr. Crump's sudden dismissal were never

## MAJOR TRANSLATION CONTRACT SENT OVERSEAS; LACK OF "QUALITY CONTROL" IN U.S. CITED

In an article written by Mary Galgota and published in "Active Voice", the newsletter of the San Francisco Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, Doug DeVries, worldwide support manager for corporate learning products at Hewlett-Packard Corporation of California, was reported to have said that his company translates over 100,000 pages of documentation into 13 languages each year. Mr. DeVries, who will be speaking in the near future at the International Technical Conference, told Ms. Galgota that a primary issue for Hewlett-Packard is how to get quality translations done in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

DeVries said that his company initially decided not to rely on U.S. translation services because of the lack of quality control, and rather to have translations done in the host countries (where Hewlett-Packard products are marketed) by native speakers of the target language.

He told "Active Voice" that translation work done overseas is handled either by in-house staff or local sub-contractors. One STC member, who requested that his name not be used, said that the volume of Hewlett-Packard's work sent overseas for translation amounted to some \$78,000,000. When questioned about his sources for this figure, he admitted that he had extrapolated it from the figures given by Mr. DeVries and from his own knowledge of the company's translation operations.

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**CRUMP CRITICIZES ATA BOARD**  
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fully clarified by ATA officials, and Crump himself has stopped short of giving the specifics, other than to say that his publication of a letter in the Chronicle by Mr. Bukacek, who also serves as Chairman of the Chicago Area Interpreters & Translators Association, was at the root of his surprise removal from the Chronicle editorship. Mr. Bukacek's letter also alleged censorship by ATA officials, and disputed the Board's right to dictate policy to the Chicago group. The Board maintained that the Chicago organization; as an ATA "working group" could not exclude translation company owners and their employees from membership.

In supporting his charges of censorship, Mr. Crump cited the unexplained "waylaying" of the Board's decision to cease all efforts to convert the Association from its current not-for-profit status to a non-profit corporation, called in IRS jargon a "501(c)(3) corporation". He issued a veiled call to ATA's freelance community to organize and demand full explanations of the Board's action.

ATA President Deanna Hammond has on various occasions vehemently denied that the organization engages in censorship of any kind.

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If your name was recently added to our mailing list and you would like to receive a copy of Edition No. 2 of TRANSLATION NEWS, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,  
Translation News.

Thank you for TRANSLATION NEWS. I believe there is a real need for an "unofficial" journal to cover matters that the Chronicle will not. I am looking forward to future issues.

Thank you and, in the matter of the affair of the recommended rates, your colleagues for  
[continued in next column]

LETTERS [continued]

your Sisyphean efforts to keep the ATA at the top of the mountain. I believe you have saved us from a lot of turmoil in that matter.

I do regret the very slight trace of self-justification in your article, which does not accord with the magnanimity you are famed for. Perhaps it can be forgiven in view of so many years of hitting your head against the wall in this and other situations.

There is surely no need for expensive outside rate surveys at the present time. All that is necessary is to allow each member to quote a basic rate and per-job minimum in the Translation Services Directory, and to state whether he offers a trade discount.

We still must come up with some mechanism to quiet the friction between some freelances and some agencies. I do not believe that a separate freelance SIG is the right one. I see nothing wrong with a freelance writing a letter of complaint about an agency or an agency writing a letter of complaint about a freelance, naming names, to the Chronicle as the official organ of the association that they both belong to.

ATA is surely paying a lot of money for membership in umbrella organizations. I am not sure we should withdraw from them, but there should certainly be a lot of discussion about whether ATA members are getting their money's worth and whether they could get better value for it.

What do we translators and ATA members need most right now? Primarily information. What is the current and projected need for translation of electronics marketing literature into Hungarian or for Portuguese pharmaceutical research into English? Is there really a greater need for the translation of Japanese patents into English? How many U.S.-born French-to-English translators will be needed 10 years from now, and are they being trained? Can I tell a teen-ager with a talent for languages that he should study Chinese as opposed to accounting, if he wants to make a good living? Where can I get five English-to-Italian computer-program translators

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## LETTERS [continued]

with impeccable track records by 3 o'clock today?

Can FIT help us with this information? Can the Joint Committee? Or will the Commerce Department for that matter? Maybe we should drop out of the North American conference and use the money for a survey. Once again, thanks.

Tom Snow  
New York, NY

To the Editor,  
TRANSLATION NEWS

I received my unsolicited and unwanted copy of TRANSLATION NEWS, and after wading through all of the translation agency propaganda, I disposed of it in the manner which I reserve for my daily ration of junk mail. Your publication, which tries, but dismally fails to sound like a respectable newspaper, immediately exposes itself for what it is: an instrument to belittle the freelance translator, the foundation of the translation profession. But it is not without its "socially-redeeming qualities", for it shows without a doubt that the only language which translation agents understand is money. And it shows who the real caring people are, people like Isabel Leonard, Steven Sachs and Vivian Yu, the latter who showed that she was not afraid to expose the translator-exploiting practices of agents. Unfortunately, the ATA directors ran scared when the agents came armed with their expensive lawyers. Yes, by resorting to legal technicalities, ATA's agents showed their true colors. They may have won this opening round, but freelance translators all over the country are becoming more and more aware of how agents exploit them, and round two is still up for grabs.

Unfortunately, I could not attend the ATA Conference last October (I was too busy translating), but had I been there, I would have insisted that Ms. Leonard instruct those attending her session (which I assume the agents tried to close on the basis of some trivial legal technicality) that they indicate on those 3 x 5 cards the names of the exploiting

agencies. Let us be thankful that there are still lots of toiling professional translators in ATA who know what the real score is. Please remove my name from your mailing list ...IMMEDIATELY.

Name withheld by request.

To the Editor,  
TRANSLATION NEWS

Thanks for sending us a copy of TRANSLATION NEWS. We did not attend the Conference and found your news very enlightening.

As a translation company with 25 years in the business, we are glad to see that you have taken the translation company side of the issue. Please do not hesitate to call on us if at any time in the future you need additional support.

Nina Emelianoff  
Transtek Associates, Inc.  
Woburn, MA

To the Editor  
TRANSLATION NEWS

AdEx and Mr. Bierman are to be congratulated on inaugurating TRANSLATION NEWS. And professional linguists everywhere can only hope that TN will make up for the Chronicle's shortcomings. While TN's corporate sympathies are evident, I know that it will provide a forum for the robust and rugged language our profession needs. Never forget that we are men and women who work with words, and if we fail to speak out against the Chronicle's "managed news", then we betray ourselves and the noble tradition in which we work. To provide our sputtering, arthritic rival with some competition is nothing less than our constitutional duty. Of course, the Chronicle's many critics must expect protest from the "Royal Family" in Ossining, and when that protest comes, we must be prepared to turn up the rhetorical heat full blast -- all within the limits of the libel laws, of course. It will be all worth it; and I can foresee a time when American translators are reaching for TRANSLATION NEWS

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**LETTERS [continued]**

or its descendant, while copies of the Chronicle languish unread in wastepaper baskets everywhere.

Several points are raised by the latest issue of TN. First, if Vivian Yu's only error was to make bureau owners look foolish, then surely she had done her colleagues an enormous service. In fact, she had exhibited daring and resourcefulness on a scale rarely found in our profession. Anyway, the very people who shriek "bias" and "deceit" wouldn't hesitate to pose as clients to elicit billing information from corporate competitors (a widespread practice). Calling all bureau owners: We translators know more about you than you think! Partly in reaction to the ATA's coziness with its corporate members, information on sweatshop agencies is now being efficiently circulated through a number of local grapevines around the country. No 3 x 5 cards are needed to achieve this purpose, I can assure you! Ms. Leonard's distribution of those cards at the ATA Convention was at least a useful scare tactic, and without restrictions on attendance, her seminar on "Freelance Concerns" would surely have been disrupted by bureau owners uttering sinister, legalistic threats.

The issue here is how to strike a balance between individual and corporate interests within our profession. Sad, then, that the withdrawal of rates guidelines should undermine the status of the very people the ATA is supposed to represent. Any 10-year old knows that informal price-fixing arrangements are in effect all over the country, pervading every root and branch of the industry and the professions. Legal action on these grounds against the translation profession would never have been even a faint possibility had the ATA not drawn attention to itself. But like a suburban housewife stricken with remorse over a library-book amnesty, the ATA guaranteed that if the antitrust laws were ever to have been enforced, they would have been so with particular vehemence against the ATA itself. In any case, translation rates are destined to resume their habitual downward course, and need I add that in these cases, it is always the struggling beginner who ends up suffering the most. For translators, a rates free-for-all always means a rates low-for-all.

In case I have left any misimpression, I should hasten to add in closing that I worship America's antitrust laws, really I do. I feel that in order for American freelance translators to keep their business affairs sweet-smelling and free of litigation, they should never do two jobs for precisely the same rate of pay. Indeed, they should take a goodly portion of their jobs for free, and once they have decided to do a particular translation gratis, they should strenuously resist all offers of remuneration, however modest, on the part of their requestor. No doubt about it, *pro bono* work fills freelancers with enormous satisfaction -- almost as much as reading the ATA Chronicle, in fact.

Neil L. Inglis  
Bethesda, MD

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**COMING SOON . . .**

**A CANDID AND REVEALING INTERVIEW  
WITH TED CRUMP, FORMER EDITOR OF  
THE ATA CHRONICLE**

**WATCH FOR IT!**

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