

The most sensational scientific discovery during my time in Antarctica was the finding of certain dinosaur fossils, similar to those found in other parts of the Earth's Southern Hemisphere. This proved beyond doubt the existence of the prehistoric Gondwana Land, 200 million years ago, and gave incontrovertible proof to the Drift Theory of the Continents, first proposed by Dr Alfred L. Wegner and published in 1912. Dr Larry Gould and Dr Grover Murray, two eminent American geologists, told me at the time in the Antarctic: "This is one of the truly great fossil finds of all times."

The original discovery had occurred on 23 November 1969 by Dr David Elliot of the Institute of Polar Studies of Ohio State University, while he was working in sandstone beds of Coalsack Bluff in the Central Trans-Antarctic Mountains. At that time, no news of this important find was released. On 4 December, part of a reptilian skull was discovered and identified by Dr E.H. Colbert as *Lystrosaurus* and this fact was released. I had written my report about the first find before anyone else on 4 December and handed it on that date to the American Communications Office for transmission to London, as was my usual practice. I was informed that my story had not been sent, no reason being given.

I therefore wrote it out again on an Official International Telegram Form and went with it to the New Zealand public Post Office at Scotts Base, a few kilometers from McMurdo. Again it was returned to me with the comment "Held by R.S. Willis" the Director of the Scott base. On its back was stamped: "4 December Scott Base Ross Dependency", as well as a friendly note: "Anthony, if this is to go at a later date, hang on to it for word check purposes Regards Derek." I cannot now recall who Derek was, but he was certainly my only friend at the time. I sent many Service Messages to Fleet Street about these events, to receive only the classic reply from the Chief News Editor: "Dinosaurs unsighted"!

These two refusals to transmit my story from the Antarctic on 4 December proved Official Censorship by the Public Information Office of the National Science Foundation in Washington. They had decided that such an important discovery had to be released by them, as indeed they did on 6 December, and not by me from the Antarctic on 4 December. They must have informed Admiral Welch of their decision, he blocked American communication channels, and in turn insisted that the New Zealand Post Office must do likewise. On 8 December the story appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* as "South Pole Hippo proves Continents were joined" with a New York date line. I received on 6 December the following telegram: "Fossil Story released here. Local Office Daily Telegraph informed. No embargo your filing. Signed Paine, Public Info Office, Nat Sci Foundation, Washington."

It was the only case of censorship in my 10 years as science correspondent, and it left me very bitter and disgusted. Was Dr Bourgin's letter of congratulation, see Title 188, a belated letter of apology?