

How Can I Learn More and Get Involved?

Books and other Media

Open Media Pamphlet Series by Seven Stories Press; phone: 1-800-596-7437; web: www.sevenstories.com/openmedia. Series includes:

Media Control, N. Chomsky, 1997. *Project Censored*, 1998. *Propaganda, Inc.*, N. Snow, 1998. *Microradio & Democracy*, G. Ruggiero, 1999. *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*, R. McChesney, 1997. *It's the Media, Stupid!* and *Our Media, Not Theirs* R. McChesney and J. Nichols, 2000 and 2002.

Rampton, S.; Stauber, J. *Toxic Sludge is Good For You*, 1995 and *Trust Us, We're Experts*, 2000.

Molnar, A. *Giving Kids the Business: Commercialization of American Schools*, 1997.

Bagdikian, B. *Media Monopoly*, 2000.

McChesney, R. *The Problem of the Media*, 2004.

Bogle, D. *Primetime Blues: African Americans on Network Television*, 2001.

Schrieffin, A. *The Business of Books*, 2001.

Hilmes, M. *Radio Culture*, 2001.

"Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism," a film by Robert Greenwald, 2004. Web: www.outfoxed.org

Alterman, E. *What Liberal Media?*, 2003.

Useful Websites

PR Watch—the newsletter of the Center for Media and Democracy, 520 Univ. Ave. Suite 227, Madison, WI 53703; phone: 608-260-9713, Web: www.prwatch.org

Prometheus Radio Project, www.prometheusradio.org

Center for Commercial Free Public Education, 1714

Franklin St. Suite 100, Oakland, CA 94612; phone: 510-268-1100; Web: www.ibiblio.org/commercialfree

Extra! magazine and *Counterspin* radio show—Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), 130 W. 25th St., New York, NY 10001; phone: 1-800-847-3993; Web: www.fair.org

Free Press, 100 Main St., PO Box 28, Northampton, MA 01061; phone: 1-866-666.1533. web: www.freepress.net

Institute for Public Accuracy, 915 National Press Bldg., Washington, DC 20045; phone: 202-347-0020; Web: www.accuracy.org

Booksense.com Independent Booksellers; Web: www.booksense.com

Independent Media Center; Web: www.indymedia.org

WNPJ Organizations Working on Media:

First Unitarian Society Social Justice Council, Wendy Cooper, 900 University Bay Dr., Madison, WI 53705; phone: 608-233-9774 ext. 25; email: wendy@fusmadison.org

Madison Infoshop, 1019 Williamson St., Madison, WI 53703; phone: 608-262-9036; Web: www.madisoninfoshop.org

Madison Women for Peace, Becky Korney and Amy Fuelleman, PO Box 930473, Verona, WI 53593; phone: 608-845-7526; email: bk4pz@yahoo.com; Web: www.madwomen.org

Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, Marsha Rummel and Allen Ruff, 426 W. Gilman, Madison, WI 53703; phone: 608-257-6050; email: rbc@supranet.com; Web: www.rainbowbookstore.org

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Mike McCabe, 210 N. Basset St., Suite 215, Madison, WI 53703; phone: 608-255-4260; email: meyer@wisdc.org; Web: www.wisdc.org/free_air_index.html

About the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice (WNPJ)

The purpose of WNPJ is to facilitate activities, cooperation, and communication among Wisconsin organizations and individuals working toward the creation of a world free from violence and injustice.

The Corporate Accountability Task Group (CATG) was created to better focus, educate, and organize our shared work for economic justice. The CATG also offers community workshops and produces other resource materials including a 100 page packet on Corporate Accountability available for \$13 from the WNPJ office.

For information about:

- Joining WNPJ
- working with the CATG
- purchasing an annual Directory of WNPJ Organizations
- attending the Annual Assembly in October
- attending the Steering Committee meeting of organizational representatives in April

Contact WNPJ at:

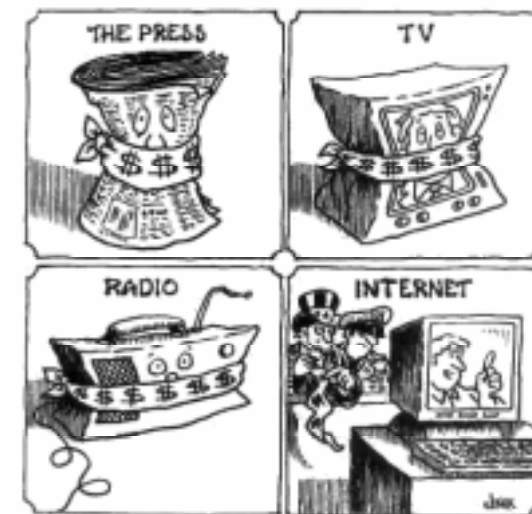
WNPJ
122 State Street, #402
Madison, WI 53703
Phone: 608-250-9240

Email: info@wnpj.org

Web: www.wnpj.org



Corporate Control of the Mass Media —A Threat To Our Democracy



What folly is this toasting an independent press? We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes. We are the jumping jacks, they pull the strings and we dance. Our talents, our possibilities, and our lives are all the property of other men.

—John Swinton, *New York Times*
chief of staff, 1953



Brochure prepared by
WNPJ Corporate
Accountability Task
Group

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What is the Corporate Media?

- The top twelve media conglomerates include: AOL-Time Warner, Viacom, News Corporation, Bertelsmann AG, Sony, Disney, Pearson PLC, Westinghouse, General Electric, Von Holtzbrinck, Hearst, and TCI.
- Media organizations often have owners that may not support a vigorously free press. The defense contractor General Electric owns a controlling interest in the media giant NBC Universal. GE executives can exert influence over reporting and entertainment in order to try to benefit itself, both by affecting individual stories and by influencing who works for NBC Universal.
- In 1945, 75% of U.S. daily newspapers were independently owned. By 1998 only 20% remained so (300 out of 1500).
- CBS and Chancellor Media now control 53% of the listener audience in the top ten U.S. radio markets.
- Tribune Company alone owns 11 newspapers with a circulation of 3.6 million and reaches 75% of the U.S. public through its nationwide TV/cable network.
- There are now more full-time public relations specialists in the U.S. than professional journalists.

Why Does This Matter?

The publicly owned air waves have been sold to the highest bidder. Market forces now largely drive the media machine, reducing people from engaged citizens to passive consumers.

The corporate entities that now reign supreme in the U.S. also export pop culture and consumerism abroad, buying up controlling interests in foreign media markets. One can now find identical programs simulcast worldwide and even the same billboards translated into dozens of languages from Chiapas to China!



We may live in the information revolution, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for citizens to make informed decisions given the narrow range of media coverage. The complex issues facing our country require more than centrist “experts” who only proffer sound bites within a mainstream perspective.

In-depth analysis can be more expensive and challenging to produce, especially when it questions prevailing values and corporate interests. It is far simpler to regurgitate material supplied by public relations firms and corporate spin doctors. Often critical coverage is censored by media owners or stifled by journalists themselves in fear of their own jobs. Even more trusted media organizations such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* have published recent pieces criticizing their own coverage in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. The papers did not prominently report on experts skeptical of claims that weapons of mass destruction would be found in Iraq.

The Fairness Doctrine, which required both sides of an issue to be represented, was also torpedoed by the 1996 Telecommunications Act, such that an even spurious notion of objective news coverage has been replaced by “infotainment.” The trend of so-called “public journalism” pioneered by the likes of USA Today is based upon focus group polls, shallow lifestyle stories, and pseudo-populist “town hall meet-

ings.” There is less hard news, less investigative work, and less international coverage.

Media consolidation also means cross merchandising and insidious product placement—with publishers, movie makers, video game programmers, fast food outlets, and toy makers all pushing coordinated marketing strategies. For example, Disney which now owns ABC also has its own chain of retail stores, radio stations, film studios, and theme parks.

Commercialization also entails limited radio play formats, TV programming, and news print space, since the advertising demands of corporate funders get top priority. This pressure has even compromised the federal funding and content integrity of public radio and television in the U.S.

Media pollution is now rampant as everything is commodified for corporate profit, leading to sexist beauty images, gratuitous violence, stereotypical portrayals of racial and ethnic groups, and unrelenting consumerism. Markets assign price tags that erode other social values and destroy public culture in the process. As William S. Burroughs warned in 1959 in *Naked Lunch*, “The junk merchant doesn’t sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to the product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies his client.”



How Can We Take Back The Media And Reclaim Our Democracy?

- Media literacy for school children to develop critical thinking skills.
- Comprehensive school district wide policies to limit corporate advertising and safeguard the integrity of public educational institutions and their curriculum.
- Restore the Fairness Doctrine so ALL viewpoints are heard.
- Rein in paid political ads and require free air time so that candidates, including those of viable third parties have access to the same media.
- Tax corporate advertising to pay for more public media and financing of electoral media campaigns.
- Hold the FCC accountable to defend public airwaves against media conglomerates.
- Limit commercial advertising during children’s programming on television.
- Insure adequate public funding for libraries, public radio, and television.
- Encourage public libraries to subscribe to a broad spectrum of periodicals and to carry a wide range of books on current affairs.
- Expand alternative media systems such as microradio, low power and community radio stations. Continue municipal funding of community access television.
- Demand more positive portrayals of minorities and women in television, film, and other mass media. Work to end the segregation of black TV programming.
- Patronize independent locally-owned bookstores and support other independent media.
- Resist efforts to privatize the Internet and otherwise limit public access to the web.