Why they won't report it and why the Funeralgate lawsuit was 'disappeared' once Bush became the GOP presidential candidate appears to be at the core of what's gone haywire with our press corps -- and a warning of how much more untrustworthy the media could become.

Had these stories been straight-forwardly reported by the national media, the obvious questions could have been asked. The public could then have gaged their significance. Perhaps Bush would have been able to persuade the electorate that the Funeralgate lawsuit was politically motivated and that the contradictions of his affidavit were caused by simple misunderstandings. Perhaps Mr. Reeves could have persuaded people that it really was just a coincidence that he ended up directing the Arkansas legal ethics panel.

Here's a brief review of my attempts to get these stories reported, which I think may illustrate some of the factors involved in their cover-ups. I first sent the information by express mail to Jim Lehrer, urging him to ask about it during the debates, and to the publishers and managing editors of the New York Times and the Washington Post. I heard nothing from Lehrer or the Times, but I got a handwritten note from the Post's publisher, Donald E. Graham, thanking me for the material and telling me which of his top reporters he was giving it to. I heard no more from Mr. Graham and the reporter never responded to my e-mails.

After I then sent the material to several other national outlets with no response, I sent a story entitled "Bush Charged With Lying Under Oath About Influence-Peddling," including links, to every publisher and editor on the AJR Newslink (many dozens), and to every other publication I thought should report it. I offered it for free, imploring them to use the information to write their own story.

During the week before the 2000 election, the editor of a major progressive publication e-mailed that he might use my story and asked me about my background. When I explained that I'm not a professional writer, he said that he was going to send my piece to an investigative journalist I considered first-rate. To my amazement, he soon e-mailed back that the journalist had declined the assignment. I then urged him to write it himself, as he's a noted writer. He said no. I implored him to tell me why. He said that on reflection he had to agree that a story of this consequence could only be broken by the New York Times -- that to ignore their prerogative might get a journalist blackballed for life.

That sounded goofy to me. But since then another highly experienced editor has told me the same thing -- agreeing that breaking a major story the Times won't report might get one blackballed. I've since confirmed that, as I always expected, others were also trying to get the Funeralgate story explained to the public before the election -- including Robert Bryce, the superb reporter for the Austin Chronicle, who'd done the most extensive reporting on the lawsuit. He told me that he took the story to the Times, but that they blew him off.

Then during the recount I revved up again, e-mailing everybody all over again. After hearing from me several times, one editor e-mailed me to calm down because they were holding a comprehensive piece by Bryce, assuring me that "it's moment will come." It didn't.

In the beginning of December, after I found out that Ken Starr's replacement, Robert Ray, was threatening to bring Monica Lewinsky back before a new, all-white grand jury, I sent a story entitled "Lying Under Oath: Concurrent Trials of Clinton and Bush?" to several editors. The managing editor of one of the nation's top newspapers, whom I had been pestering for weeks without any response, almost immediately e-mailed back that he was showing my piece to his national editor. He said he probably wouldn't use it, but maybe. The national editor e-mailed that he might have the story written by the excellent staff writer who'd been covering the Funeralgate story before Bush became the GOP nominee. He accepted my offer to send all my material to the writer. Two days later the paper broke the story of Robert Ray's squeeze play on Monica Lewinsky (leaving out that the new grand jury was all white). And saying nothing about the lawsuit against Bush.

I sent that same editor my long piece written before the mid-term election. If you read the thing to the end, you see why I wasn't as frustrated as usual by what he e-mailed back: "Thanks very much. We'll be covering the FCC deliberations." He hasn't reported any of this withheld info yet, but I'm not giving up on
him.

As I speculate in my piece, my best guess as to what's going on here is greed on the part of the media owners and fear on the part of journalists. Most people that I've told this tale have resisted believing that if the stories of the Funeralegate lawsuit and the secret machinations behind the disbarment attempt were really legitimate, somebody wouldn't report them in order to make a name for himself. All I can do is point out that nobody has. The lawsuit was real. It was steadily progressing through the discovery process while defendant Bush was the president of the United States. Unlike the Jones case, it wasn't thrown out on summary judgment.

People are naturally wary of anything that smacks of conspiracy theories. But this dynamic requires no conspiracy. The bottom line is simply that if media ownership is further concentrated in the hands of only a few, virtually no journalists who want careers in the mainstream press will dare report any information that could possibly threaten the interests of the owners controlling the major media outlets. As my article illustrates, this is already the case to a frightening degree.

The indisputable facts are that in contrast to the exhaustive reportage of every allegation against Clinton, the press suppressed the news of the legal developments in a whistleblower lawsuit brought against Governor Bush by an executive director of a state agency. Perhaps even more damagingly, covering-up the real story behind the impeachment and disbarment drives has resulted in the press not explaining to the public that Bush has rewarded many of the get-Clinton players with extremely important positions, e.g. Ted Olson, John Bates, Michael Chertoff, Viet Dinh, and a lot of others.

There are many other significant stories that have been lost. Another dropped story that shockingly illustrates the deceitful double standard that the press has been employing for reasons of its own is that Bush brazenly lied in the Oval Office when asked about a damaging relationship, exactly like Clinton did. Except that in contrast to the thousands of times that news divisions replayed Clinton's denial of having had sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky (Chris Matthews bragged to Jeffrey Toobin in 2001 that he'd shown the clip of Clinton's worst moment at least 500 times on his show -- and he's still replaying it on every possible occasion), the clip of Bush baldfacedly lying that he'd gotten to know of Ken Lay because Lay supported his opponent, Ann Richardson, vanished almost immediately.

The policy consequences of the media's double standard for scandal coverage can't be overstated. It amounts to sponsorship of the Bush agenda, although the media owners may only care about their own interests. Beyond that it's a complete failure to responsibly report news that really matters. The nation needs to have these secrets exposed in order to stop the cover-up trap that leads to more and more cover-ups, lies, and distortions.

Nevertheless, those of you who oppose further deregulation of media concentration may recoil from all this political stuff. But we opponents of more deregulation are poised to lose big on June 2. The nation is poised to lose big.

Since receiving my Ph.D in communication from USC, I've been recording and producing audio books, a great number of them histories. This has given me a passion for our democracy and freedoms. We mustn't lose this opportunity to stop the corruption of our free press. The forces behind the drive for more media "oligopoly," as described by Barry Diller, have played their hand ruthlessly.

Here in L.A. there are the resources to fight back and get these truths out. Please do all you can to stop this theft.

Roses Prichard
I am a citizen who greatly values diversity in media, and although this has just about disappeared on the television, it still exists in many radio and text sources. The deregulation of how many media entities one corporation can own is a great threat to diversity in our media, and a great step towards a state like that of Orwell's 1984. The people of this country have already suffered from the deregulation in 1996 which made it possible for companies like Clear Channel to end up where they are now, owning 10% of the radio stations in the country. So for the sake of free speech and diversity in the media there should not be a push for deregulation, but rather regulation of how many media sources one corporation can own.

CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
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CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
One hardly needs media consolidation to end up with really awful media. Coverage of the war in Iraq has more than proved that. However, consolidation has some potentially scary effects that makes matters worse than they are already. Chris Weare, Jordan Raphael and I wrote a paper for the Harvard Journal of Press-Politics that shows the the chilling effects on editorial diversity when print media also hold broadcast licenses (subject to government approval). This points up the larger problem of indirect influence on programming through the license approval/renewal process. Clear Channel's pro-war rallies may be nothing more than a way to curry favor with the current administration in order to get what they are asking for from the FCC. (Although Powell seems pretty eager to give the industry what it wants anyway.)

The other thing that is worrisome is the impact consolidation has on the diversity of ownership. For those who are interested, you can check out the latest issue of Black Enterprise (http://www.blackenterprise.com/) for a thoughtful and balanced article on the subject. For those of you really, really interested in this topic, I would direct you to The Aspen Institute's series on Diversity in the Media (part of the Communications and Society program that covers other issues of interest in the debate over media consolidation):
http://www.aspeninstitute.org/Program3.asp?bid=545
The links provided here will take you to program reports that cover some of the difficulties faced by diverse media voices. The issue of consolidation comes up again as having a narrowing effect on diversity.

The bottom line is this: we should think hard about the effects of policy changes will have and whether we want those effects or not. The last time we had a big-time rulemaking on ownership caps we gave the industry what they wanted (a genuine pattern at the FCC and its forerunner, the Federal Radio Commission) and a lot of folks woke up after a few years and said: "What happened?" Whether you think consolidation is a good thing or not, we should at least have a clear idea of what we're doing and whether it is a good thing or not. Last time we didn't have serious public debate or policy analysis and we got blindsided by Clear Channel. (What is it with those super-aggressive Texans?) Let's work to slow this thing down while we can.

Or as my dad used to tell me over and over (I was a slow learner on this one): Look before you leap.

T

Titus Levi
1-213-740-8154 phone
Annenberg School of Communication 1-213-740-3913 fax
University of Southern California tlevi@almaak.usc.edu
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0281 office: asc 321B
USA

The genius is the one who plays most like himself.
From: T
To: Prichard
Date: Sun, Apr 27, 2003 11:05 AM
Subject: Re: Media Consolidation consequences

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USA

The genius is the one who plays most like himself.
Hello, Webmaster! Your site is terrific, except something very important is not functioning now. It worked fine for me yesterday morning, when I submitted my comment on the rule revision for media ownership...which is a really vital issue to our country right now.

After that, though, a friend contacted me saying she couldn't figure out how to send her comment. I tried to duplicate what had easily worked for me a couple of hours earlier, but got the "Sorry, Page Not Found" message. Could it be you're getting flooded with comments and missing them all? This would be an ironic shame.

Please look into it and fix it ASAP, so the democratic process can function properly. Thank you.
Anne W. Phillips
4010 89th Ave SE
Mercer Island, WA
98040

CC: Mercer Island PeaceMakers, Mike Powell, Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein, sally beane
From: Robert Hunter
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sun, Apr 27, 2003 12:05 PM
Subject: Local Ownership and Local Information

Dear Chairman Powell

In re: Proceeding 02-277

Ouch! Constriction hurts. For over forty years working in print and broadcast media, I have watched with awe, shock, and downright disgruntlement as my sources of information (yes, and jobs) have withered away to the secular apologetics of the network news and the quasi-religious "happy talk" of Oprah and Dr. Phil.

I heartily agree with the words of Mike Michaud, my representative in a reply letter to my query about the Local Radio Ownership rules changes pending. "I share your concern that media conglomeration could restrict public discourse to fewer and fewer voices," said Rep Michaud.

The no-holds-barred cutthroat capitalism of free-market media competition gave me some of the highest and lowest points of my career: from the Milwaukee Journal to the Woonsocket (Rhode Island) Call and from Westinghouse Broadcasting to one of the last stand-alone independents here in the Maine woods. It was a glorious scrabble. Please keep it free.

Best,

Rob Hunter, late of WINS, WNEW, WBAI-Pacific, WBT Charlotte, WJAR Channel 10 Providence, WIVY, WSAR-Fall River, WWON-Woonsocket and WQDY in Calais, Maine.
Dear Messrs. Powell and Martin:

I ardently oppose the Commission's proposed deregulation of the media. On the contrary, too much damage has been done already, and we need to tighten media ownership rules, in order to check the trend of conglomeration, especially within a single market.

Democracy depends fundamentally on people receiving a broad information stream, and multiple viewpoints. Coverage of recent events, such as the war, make painfully clear how narrow the information stream reaching the American public really is. The major gap in public opinion between Americans, and people from other parts of the world, highlights a critical information divide. Public opinion is only as good as the information it is based on, and for whatever reason, most Americans rely exclusively on mainstream news sources for their information. But legions of people who work for such organizations, including some of their most elite mouthpieces, have told us that they find themselves stifled. They acknowledge that if they take too big a risk, and express too unpopular a view, the axe will fall.

However, new the model is, or complicated the structure, American media is degenerating into propaganda. The rest of the world knows it, and the U.S. is growing increasingly reviled and isolated.

The decisions you make are integral to this process, and will either hasten it, or help reverse it.

Sincerely,

Ben Rosenfeld
Attorney
April 27, 2003

Chairman, Federal Communications Commission Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman, Federal Communications Commission Powell:

This action is outrageous. It reeks with the smell of money. It is ANT-AMERICAN!

The FCC must NOT further weaken the rules that help preserve competition and diversity among the owners of American media.

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

The FCC is currently considering sweeping changes to broadcast ownership rules. Repeal of or further modification to these rules will likely open the door to more mergers that will continue to reduce competition and diversity in the media. If the rules are weakened further, one company in a city could control the most popular newspaper, TV station and possibly the cable system, giving it dominant influence over the content and slant of news and information. Such a move would reduce the diversity of cultural and political discussion in this country. Media ownership would be concentrated by corporate monopolies even further, and the public's ability to have open, informed discussion with diverse viewpoints would be compromised.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the
FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Rohrer, Ph.D.
The mission of the FCC is to guarantee freedom of information and citizen access to objective news. This needs to be true for people of all ages, all locations, and all points of view. It is not the FCC's job description to determine what news should be made available to the rest of us, nor should that decision be made by corporations that control large parts of the communication network and have their own goals in what should reach the populace.

Freedom of the Press is the backbone of democracy, but it doesn't mean that the Press can be allowed to select the news in every aspect of reaching those who are dependent on the Press for accuracy in reporting. We should not be allowed to be manipulated.

Thank you for your attention.

Doris and Ralph Copperman
From: Jacknella28@cs.com
To: Mike Powell
Date: Sun, Apr 27, 2003 1:58 PM
Subject: June 2nd give away

FCC Commissioner Powell:
I would like to add my voice of dissent to your allowing even more ownership of our airways by the richest corporations on June 2nd. I firmly believe if the people of this country knew and were made to understand the consequences of what you sir are about to do they would be quite upset. Where is the diversity now, and how much will we have after June 2? Thank you
John Cannella

CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
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CC: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein
Dear Chairman Powell:

I think the FCC should move toward more diversity in media rather than less. In other words, there should be more Federal control over media mergers, instead of allowing consolidations. Free speech is the most important freedom we have. It should not be restricted by having it governed by too few outlets.

Doris Rausch, Ellicott city, MD
Dear FCC Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein,

The FCC must consider the unique needs of children in its upcoming rulemaking on broadcast ownership rules. Children consume almost five and a half hours of media per day. Research has shown that media, particularly television, play a unique and powerful role in children’s development.

The FCC should consider how further relaxation of media ownership rules would impact children’s programming. Deregulation may reduce competition, increase commercialism and result in less original programming for children.

Before making any regulatory changes to existing media ownership rules, the FCC must consider how children will be affected.

Sincerely,

Jane Bruce-Munro
P.O. Box 2506
Santa Cruz, California 95063-2506

cc:
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Representative Sam Farr
FCC Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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Sincerely,

David Zanotti
215 Brook Lane Ave
Holland, Michigan 49423

cc:
Senator Carl Levin
Representative Pete Hoekstra
Senator Debbie Stabenow
From: L A Moyer
To: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein, Mike Powell
Date: Sun, Apr 27, 2003 5:08 PM
Subject: STOP THE DE-REGULATION OF FCC LICENSING

April 27, 2003

Federal Communications Commission

Attention:
Chairman Michael K. Powell: mpowell@fcc.gov
Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy: kabernat@fcc.gov
Commissioner Michael J. Copps: mcopps@fcc.gov
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin: kjmweb@fcc.gov
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein: jadelste@fcc.gov

CC: FCC COMPLAINTS fccinfo@fcc.gov
Elections and Political Candidate Matters: campaignlaw@fcc.gov

RE: DE-REGULATION OF FCC LICENSES TO BENEFIT CORPORATE TAKE-OVER OF THE MEDIA.

Chairman and Commissioners,

I object to the wholesale giveaway of FCC licenses to corporate mega media control and the fundamental abridging of our First Amendment Constitutional Right to a free press.

By allowing only a few corporations to buy, merge and hold licenses, you will be destroying anything that is now left of the airways that allow independent journalism and competition... and will, in effect, censor our basic right to legitimate news sources and the dissemination of a variety of points of view.

This is a shameless adjunct to the Patriot Act, CAPSS II and the intimidation of the public who would rise up against this administration AND a blatant attempt to keep any semblance of truth from an unsuspecting public. This last piece of the puzzle is just too much.

It is apparent that the Republican Right is RUNNING THE TABLES while it can, rolling back civil and workers rights, women's rights, environmental protections, education and destroying this government financially... and anything else it can do, including the unilateral military domination of the world and its oil, beginning with the Middle East and intimidating European nations, to benefit insider corporations. It's criminal and immoral!

This administration is WRAPPING ITSELF IN THE FLAG AND BURNING OUR CONSTITUTION.

IT/YOU AND THE FCC SHOULD BE DEEPLY ASHAMED.

I appeal to your senses of morality and ethics, and your responsibility to the American people, to stop this insanity. Stop this corporate give-away!

Sincerely,

Lucille Moyer
San Jose, CA
CC: Campaignlaw, FCC FCCINFO
From: L A Moyer
To: Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, KM KJMWEB, Commissioner Adelstein, Mike Powell
Date: Sun, Apr 27, 2003 5:08 PM
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Commissioner Kevin J. Martin: kjmweb@fcc.gov
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein: jadelste@fcc.gov

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