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MAY 08 2003
FCC MAIL ROOM

April 28, 2003
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Kathleen Abernathy, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington D.C. 20554
by U.S. Mail

MAY 09 2003
Newspaper Center

re: relaxation of newspaper-broadcast cross ownership rules

Dear Commissioner Abernathy:

I oppose deregulation of newspaper-broadcast cross ownership rules. Deregulation would further transferring control of our democracy's communications from citizens to corporations. I am a citizen.

Enclosed is a copy of my July 20, 1999 letter to my then-congressman opposing deregulation of radio ownership (I have since moved to the address above). Similar reasoning applies to the issue of cross-media ownership.

The effect of ownership concentration has become clearer in the last four years, an effect warned against nearly 200 years ago:

"A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy; or, perhaps, both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." James Madison

The recent public debate on Iraq re-makes this point: the full statement of anti-war position occurred only on the internet and in foreign print media, but not in the mainstream U.S. print, audio or visual media. We now know that one FCC-creation, Clear Channel, consciously curtailed the public debate. This is the "farce or tragedy" of which James Madison warns.

Also enclosed is a letter-to-the-editor which I wrote, explaining the consequences of the lack of easily accessible (mainstream media) information to the electorate.

In the end, your position on this issue is a matter of your values and character. I point you to the values and character of Madison, Jefferson and Washington.

Sincerely,
Michael L. Shoen

Michael L. Shoen

July 20, 1999
8202 N.W. 16th. Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98665 USA
360-574-3673

U.S. Senator Slade Gorton
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Federal Building
500 W. 12th. St., Room 130
Vancouver, WA 98660

Dear Senator Gorton:

I am a registered voter, taxpayer, business owner and father of three teenagers in Clark County, Washington.

I am writing to express my opposition to that portion of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 which allows single ownership of as many as eight radio stations in one market.

In 1997 and 1998 I investigated the purchase of an F.M. radio station in the urban West Coast markets. I attended three major industry conventions and subscribed to and read a variety of industry publications. I had the assistance of an individual who had worked in the business for 50 years.

What I learned includes: four companies own 90% of the F.M. coverage for urban markets over 500,000 listeners. Please read this sentence again to be certain that you understand. To put it simply, Ted Turner and three of his peers control what you, I, our children and our neighbors' children listen to, throughout the entire United States.

Music is selected through demographic test listening by a few music survey companies who then sell their survey results to the major players or who are in fact owned by the majors. This insures that we get the same bland, from-the-pocketbook-not-from-the-heart, commercially-tested "product" over and over again. This includes advertising and news.

Because of economies of scale and increased competition brought about by this ownership deregulation, F.M. station prices have tripled, quadrupled and beyond. The company I represented did not purchase a station because prices were so high that a reasonable economic return was unlikely for a single-station owner.

The result is a cultural melting pot which discourages diversity and filters creativity. Programming is determined by a few mega-owners and, ultimately, by large-market demographic testing.

March 28, 2003
6719 E. malcomb Dr.
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480-922-9766
mikelshoen@aol.com

Douglas McDaniel
Editor, Town of Paradise Valley Independent
11000 N. Scottsdale Rd, Suite 210
Scottsdale, AZ 85254
U.S. Mail and fax: 480-948-0496

Dear Mr. McDaniel:

Thank you for publishing the commentary by Charles N. Davis, as well as a much earlier commentary by Tom Jenney on the principles of Barry Goldwater.

For 18 years I have had on my bulletin board this statement by James Madison: "The loss of liberty at home is to be charged to the provisions against danger, real or pretended, from abroad."

Davis does not state the problem broadly enough. The problem is: man naturally wants to aggregate power; the founding fathers tried to prevent accumulation of power through the separation of powers and checks and balances; John Adams warned that the citizenry would not have the intelligence to direct the republic; on Nov. 22, 1963 the intelligence agencies achieved extraordinary success in bending the direction of the country without detection; this emboldened these agencies and the power elite to aggressively wage foreign policy in secret, avoiding the scrutiny of both Congress and the electorate; this coincided with three other events: the degradation of public education via the NEA; the triumph of consumerism and the public's distraction by the trivia of consumption; the centralization of media and their replacement of news with entertainment, all culminating in the public's ensuing lack of knowledge of their loss of control of the republic; George W. Bush and his advisors are simply the end result of this progression of events.

The seminal book on the ascendancy of the secret government is Victor Marchetti's The CIA and the cult of secrecy. The primer on media is Mander's Four arguments for the elimination of television. There are, of course, many more, but who reads anyway?

Thank You, Mike Shoen



Specifically, here are four artists whom you, I and our children will never hear on the radio:

Josephine Baker
Fred McDowell
John Fahey
Lydia Mendoza

Ask a musicologist or a music historian and I think you will find that these were some of the more significant popular musicians of this century -- whose work has been collected by the Library of Congress and appreciated by collectors throughout the world. Our nation will never hear their music on radio.

If we presume that radio does not have the role of educating or improving the populace, then this is acceptable. The downside is that our music culture is being reduced to its lowest common denominator by centralized control. Radio audience are excluded from the broad spectrum of beautiful music and overpowered by a narrow band of "market-approved" music. I suppose this is part of "the dumbing down" of America.

I do not intend to impose my musical tastes or the tastes of the the Library of Congress on others, but, conversely neither myself, the curators of the Library of Congress, nor most Americans want the market-tested, lowest-common-denominator tastes of four large corporations imposed on them.

Because of this, grass-roots internet radio is burgeoning.

But just because some listeners are creating an alternate medium for diversity and quality, does not mean that diversity and quality should continue to be denied most Americans on F.M. radio.

I believe that time is showing and will show that the deregulation of local radio ownership is having a significant adverse effect on the diversity, beauty and quality of our culture.

This will ultimately have a negative effect on our values. It is the values of a society, not its physical resources, which give it strength. Martin Luther King said that, "America is an idea." The question is -- what idea?

The idea which triumphed was mega-corporation profit. The idea discarded was that the average citizen should have easy access to a broad spectrum of beauty and creativity.

Which is the better idea?

Sincerely,



Michael L. Shoen



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MAY 13 2003
Distribution Center

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Washington D.C. 20554
by U.S. Mail

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I recently read "Our Media, Not Theirs" which explains these matters. Do not go down in history as one who surrendered what remained of our electorate's ability to communicate within itself. Please act to protect our democracy.

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