

The People United is a Wonderful Thing

Being a society that once required interacting with other people or reading books for information and entertainment, the new generations of electro-dependent humans now have the luxury of sitting in front of a TV, plugging into an iPod, listening to the radio, or surfing the web. We have entered an Electronic Age and we are already started to draw conclusions on how it is changing the way our brains work. Experts have linked Attention Deficit Disorder to the dependence on imagery (too much TV). Ten years ago Apple, AT&T, Hewlett Packard and Intel funded a study that linked internet use to depression based on a "lack of human interaction" (Uechi, 14). On top of these problems such as global warming, an issue that will change the way the world operates should have been made public when warned about twenty years ago. We would have stopped burning fossil fuels, the EPA would not have to report 90% of the air Americans breath to be considered "unbreathable" and we would not have to contemplate drastic measures in order to correct our global climate. Big Business did not want us to know of these problems and has been making huge profits the public not knowing. Buying out the media has been their tool in keeping the people uneducated, and they have been very successful.

Some problems with our media, one that does not present the truth are listed above. Others include basic crimes on humanity; the use of slave labor to make clothing for most name brands, or genocides in countries where they have names we cannot pronounce. These problems if broadcasted into our media would be resolved. In WWII we heard what was going on in Germany and we went to fight for a real cause, the American people made the decision to go to war and became heroes. For the name brands it is safe to say that people would boycott Nike if they knew the clothing they are wearing was made by a small child working 12 hour days being paid 20cents an hour, it would just not be "cool" anymore. The facades placed over the American people by our media are not only about corruption and global disasters, but there are also serious cultural and community problems that affect our day to day lives. It would not be hard to have a media that properly represented the people and real issues; to accomplish this people need to be running the media, not large corporations.

The Federal Communication Commission ("FCC") is the gatekeeper to all broadcasting in the United States. This Government branch distributes the rights to utilize AM/FM radio, public television, paper routs, and also local and long distance phone networks. These rights are free to whoever receives them. The FCC also has the job of regulating all other forms of communication such as Cable TV, Internet, Cellular Networks, and any other form of Telecommunications you can think of. The problems with our media start with the decisions the FCC makes, if you wanted to thank someone for not being able to get Cable Modem in a DSL zone, write the FCC.

But not being able to get Cable in a DSL zone should be the least of your worries, after all, DSL is cheaper than Cable Modem. TimeWarner Communications one of the largest media conglomerate in the world; they hold 17.9% of the worlds cable subscribers, plus 3.5 million subscribers from their joint partnership with Comcast and Adelphia. Because this Giant holds monopolies they are able to up the

price on Cable three times the amount of inflation (Learn More). Much like the game monopoly, when you own one you can jack up the prices on everyone. Except, in the real life game of monopoly, all the proprietors team up with each other avoiding competition at all costs (Aufderheide). Media Conglomerates only care about money, so they cut costs, and withhold important news for entertainment. News Corp. owner of 37 US TV stations including FOX is a good example of when poor funding meets the news. Although they do have some pretty great video editors, FOX has a hard time reporting what is really going on globally, nationally, and locally. On the global level FOX pretty much replays the same reports every other News Broadcaster plays because they lack the funds for private reporters, or the funds to dispatch news teams. For National news it is about the same as global, but they add fake news or the proper term, Video News Releases (VNR). The Center for Media and Democracy holds ongoing studies for VNRs and in the most recent study ending in November of this year, CMD followed 54 VNRs in 22 states for six months, Fox aired 9, ABC 13, CBS 12, and NBC 5. On local levels, if it is not exciting, news rooms will not touch it. In my town of Costa Mesa, the former police chief Snoden wrote the news networks stating how serious crime was on a 56% decrease over the past ten years, but the current city council managed to see a 17% increase in serious crimes in the past two years. In the Local news this was not covered, information did not hit voters for the midterm elections and the Costa Mesa mayor responsible for the crime increase was reelected by 3% of the vote. Consolidation hurts American communities, and it also hurts our culture. Every day people are coming up with new ideas, writing songs, books, and scripts, and every day the media turns them down. For musicians getting your music played on the radio is tough. Calling the local radio station now requires going through a corporate ladder, if they wanted to play your music it has to be programmed into an out-of-state managed play list. If you are a new musician these conglomerates will not air your music because they cannot afford to take a risk. Some of these conglomerates have more than one hundred million listeners a week, if they play something that is not acceptable they will lose too many listeners (Media). The same problem occurs with books and scripts for movie and TV shows. It is impossible to launch anything controversial, because if it fails, it may turn down millions of consumers. By not trying new ideas programming is dull, but the corporations won't lose viewers because there are no alternatives. No competition and barely acceptable programming help Media Giants pull in big profits.

General Electric's revenues for 2005 were \$157.2 billion, Time Warner's \$43.5 billion, Disney's (owner of ABC) \$31.9 billion, News Corp. \$23.9 billion, CBS \$14.5 billion (Learn more). Consolidating more media, these Conglomerates are reaching a maximum that the law allows; owning roughly 75% of TV, Radio stations, Film, Publishing, and an unknown amount of the Online Recourses (FOX owns Myspace). The other 25% is owned by independent or "indie" companies, like Sony...The real indie media ownership in the US is estimated to be 5% of the market.

Media ownership before 1996 was reversed from today, only 25% of the media was owned by conglomerates. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 changed all this; it deregulated ownership laws with claims to create competition inside the market, "This is what the Act is all about - competition, not consolidation," Al Gore said standing beside FCC chairman Reed Hundt days after the law was

passed. Under the new law however, the choice for competition or consolidation was given to the corporations. Recently sold Radio giant Clear Channel owned 43 radio stations in 1995, once the 1996 Act was passed it started buying out radio stations and within five years grew to owning 1,233(Bauer). Clear Channel like all the Telecommunication companies ("Telco's") avoided competition, so the merges of large Telco's continue today. AT&T and SBC are right now trying to merge, if this happens we could see the same increase in pricing that has happened with cable TV. With all the problems media consolidation has caused to the American people, the FCC is trying to further deregulate media ownership laws which will allow for further consolidation.

Former FCC chairman Hundt who passed the act in 1996 was asked to submit an essay by June of 2006; this essay has been compiled with others and sent to the FCC for guidance in reforming media laws. Unlike most who thought the act was a complete failure, Hundt raved of its success, "all, including cable and wireless firms, have returned to shareholders about three times their money from 1995 to the present. That's a terrific result in terms of total return to shareholders." Hundt continued to rave of corporate dominance as if it were a good thing. At the end of the essay Hundt wrote to the FCC, "Remember, you're not elected, and you're not there long, so just do what you think is right" Hundt is paid by Intel and many other technology companies to serve as an adviser. This is a scary recommendation to the FCC, but it shows who the people are up against, corporations that are winning the battle. The FCC is leaning to loosen ownership laws, and they want to make a decision this month!

December 20th 2006 is the last hearing the FCC will hold and December 21st is the last day the FCC will be taking recommendations from the public. I attended the first two FCC hearings on October 3rd 2006 and spoke against media consolidation along with hundreds of people. Only one person from the public spoke for deregulation of media ownership laws, it was an overwhelming majority against. After talking with longtime Radio owner of the truly last indie radio station in LA/OC, he told me they will go for it anyways. Although the FCC is supposed to work for the public's interests, there are five commissioners, only two of them are. As FCC commissioner Michael Copps said "They screwed it up once. Believe me, they're 100 percent capable of screwing it up again." In the end, as a community, as a country, as a world, we cannot allow this to happen. Write the FCC before the deadline and if they persist on going against the wishes of the people, join us in protest, we will not allow a complete corporate takeover.

i am sending you this essay i wrote, in hopes that you will see from the perspective of the people.. you are one of us are you not?

break up the media giants, lets take it back under your power.