

The Invisible Hand of the Media

"You can change the channel but you cannot change the news."

"A national survey of fifty local television newscasts by the Rocky Mountain Media Watch, a Denver-based nonprofit group, revealed what viewers already knew," charges Carl Jensen, author of *Censored* 1996. "Local TV news focuses on crime, disasters, sensational visuals, weather, sports, promotions and ads – to the exclusion of real news."

With local television stations all reporting the same news simultaneously, one claiming the title "news leader", another billing itself as the one with "total news", it is apparently becoming more difficult for the public to distinguish one from the other – or from common entertainment, according to former CIA agent, Philip Agee.

"Television news is show business," declares Agee in his book *On the Run* (Lyle Stuart Inc., 1987), "designed to entertain and intentionally or not, programmed to keep people ignorant." With an observation as this written ten years ago, George Orwell's prophetic world where "ignorance is strength" no longer seems a prophetic forecast, but a present reality.

Surfing between channels, seeking a different perspective on a particular news story, or to even see a different story, one can easily observe that not only are the reports worded nearly identically, but the photography, in many cases, is identical.

A logically sardonic question could be posed as to why the waste of resources? Why not pool them into one reporting agency and charge the advertisers two or three times the standard fee based on how many news sources were eliminated in the consolidation?

The answer, other than the obvious monetary considerations, perhaps lies with Carl Jensen's assessment of Adolph Hitler's philosophy of information control – More than half a century ago Hitler said the masses take a long time to understand and remember, thus it is necessary to repeat the message time and time and time again. The public must be conditioned to accept the claims that are made...no matter how outrageous or false those claims might be." *Censored* 1996.

Last month *Good Morning America* reported that a state governor announced the Fig Newton as his state's official fruit cookie. The comment made by the program's host, amidst much laughter was, "You'd think the Governor would have a few better things to do." With such an observation, would it not seem logical that *Good Morning America* would have much better items to report on?

"If, however, the public does not receive all the information it needs to make informed decisions," Jensen claims, "then some form of news blackout is taking place... some issues are overlooked (what we call 'censored') and other issues are over-covered (what we call 'junk food news')."

Why does a boxer's bitten ear receive local and nationwide coverage, but we are never told about presidential Executive Orders that affect the entire nation? Why does the case of a slain child beauty queen receive daily updates, but UN sanctions that starve thousands during their "peacekeeping" operations, receive only a passing mention? One can receive minute detail on the actions of a homosexual serial killer involving a nationwide hunt for a man possibly dressed as a woman, but UN soldiers camouflaged as peacekeepers are scarcely reported?

Aldous Huxley in his book, *Brave New World*, observes, "The greatest triumphs of propaganda have been accomplished, not by doing something, but by refraining from doing. Great is truth, but still greater, from a practical point of view, is silence about truth." A child's death is certainly a tragedy. A bitten ear is painful, yet things that affect an entire nation or the world are seldom, if ever, covered. Truth, it seems, is destined to be forever buried under a flood of "cookies".

Ruled By Money Not Truth

Peter Phillips observes in his book, *Censored 1997*, why it is so difficult in this age of information to obtain true, pertinent facts that have a distinct impact upon the lives of this country's citizens.

"Corporate-owned media outlets tend to ignore or dismiss stories that run counter to corporate interests," Phillips observes. "Why does a particular story not receive the coverage it deserves in the media? While a variety of reasons may be at cause, foremost among them...seems to be conflict of interest issues involving the financial concerns of major media advertisers."

Walter Cronkite, intimately aware that the news media is controlled by money, laments, "Those who permit such pressure to be exerted clearly are thinking purely of their pocketbooks and that alone – not of the people's rights to know or necessity to know – and I abhor it." Apparently, the hand that pays the news media controls the mouthpiece as well. It does not appear to be a question only of news gathering costs being supported by advertisers. The advertisers themselves are the apparent determiners of what is newsworthy based exclusively upon monetary considerations.

When this ethic is applied to multi-national corporations whose yearly revenue arguably exceeds the national budget of most third world countries, the stakes are raised to a level that far exceeds merely the success or failure in the marketplace of a new model of automobile or a diet pill.

"In the United States, in particular," says Benjamin Ginsberg, Director of the Center for Governmental Studies at Johns Hopkins University, "the ability of the upper and upper-middle classes to dominate the marketplace of ideas has generally allowed these strata to shape the entire society's perception of political reality and the range of realistic political and social possibilities. While westerners usually equate the marketplace with freedom of

opinion, the hidden hand of the market can be almost as potent an instrument of control as the iron fist of the state." (From *The Captive Public*, New York: Basic Books, 1986).

While news is driven by advertising sales, there is another aspect to the proliferation of media censorship. "...A significant reason...stories were not covered has to do with the conglomeration of the mainstream press," says Peter Phillips in his introduction to the 1997 volume of *Project Censored*. "This has resulted in fewer media outlets, increased pressure on news divisions to produce higher ratings and profits...."

The Telecommunications Deregulation Bill, signed into law February of 1996 by President Clinton, generated significant opposition due to a piece of legislation tacked onto it called the Communications Decency Act (CDA). Most of the opposition to the bill resulted from fears of censorship, but few recognized that the CDA allowed for the creation of virtual monopolies in the communications arena from the purchase of multiple media outlets by large corporations. General Electric's ownership of the National Broadcasting Corporation with all its subsidiaries, for example, ensures that anything NBC airs will not run counter to GE's policies or conflict with its revenue base. The same principle would necessarily apply to Time Warner's ownership of Turner Broadcasting, Disney's takeover of ABC and Westinghouse's control of CBS.

Manipulators of the Masses

"Those who manipulate the organized habits and opinions of the masses constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country", wrote Edward Bernays, assistant to William Paley, founder of CBS. "...We are dominated by a relatively small number of persons...."

"...Media corporations, practicing 'press release' journalism, have become dependent on established sources of information available through government and corporate channels. These channels sanitize and spin the news to reflect their special interests, and downsized news organizations do not expend resources to do the in-depth investigative news gathering necessary to counter these packaged versions of the news. Therefore, stories that run counter to major corporate or governmental messages tend to be ignored or discounted." – *Censored 1997*.

Does a larger portrait of corporate intent emerge from this? For example, would General Electric, previously one of the nation's leading manufacturers of nuclear reactors, have allowed NBC to disseminate accurate, in-depth news critical of nuclear power? Is it also realistic to think that a government bent on world dominion would allow news releases of national and international importance if that news would prove counterproductive to its political agenda?

By observing history, can we not see that governmental and media censorship is greatest when efforts at major national control are being undertaken? Walter Cronkite addressed the issue of governmental control of the press and information flow when he said,

"Limitations on press freedom are imposed by the government itself despite the very clear wording of the First Amendment that there shall be 'no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.'

"The government limits freedom of information through secrecy, the almost uncontrolled use of the document classification privilege," Cronkite continued in his introduction to *Censored 1996*. "It limits freedom also by limiting access to news sources. The government limits freedom when it, as the courts have from time to time, forces revelation of reporters' sources, a process which can cut off valuable, perhaps unique springs of information. And there is what I consider to be the greatest threat to freedom of information: the government licensing of broadcasting."

"A 1975 study on 'governability of democracies' by the Trilateral Commission concluded that the media have become a 'notable new source of national power,' writes Noam Chomsky in his book, *Necessary Illusions*. Samuel Huntington, a professor of international politics at Harvard and the chairman of Harvard's Institute for Strategic Planning said, in his book, *The Crisis of Democracy*, "Truman had been able to govern the country with the cooperation of a relatively small number of Wall Street lawyers and bankers." (New York University, 1975). World bankers, by pulling a few simple levers that control the flow of money, can make or break entire economies. By controlling press releases of economic strategies that shape national trends, the power elite are able to not only tighten their stranglehold on this nation's economic structure, but can extend that control world wide.

Those possessing such power would logically want to remain in the background, invisible to the average citizen. Expressing that very sentiment, David Rockefeller, founder of the aforementioned Trilateral Commission in June of 1991, addressed a meeting of that organization.

"We are grateful to *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*," Rockefeller told them, "and other great publications whose directors have attended our meetings and respected their promises of discretion for almost forty years. It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world if we had been subject to the bright lights of publicity during those years. But, the world is now more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national autodetermination [read as "democracy"] practiced in past centuries."

"...A handful of us," wrote Walter Cronkite, again from his introduction to *Censored 1996*, "determine what will be on the evening news broadcasts, or, for that matter, in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* or *Wall Street Journal*... Indeed it is a handful of us with this awesome power... And those [news stories] available to us already have been culled and re-culled by persons far outside our control."

A Sick Nation

"We are as sick as our secrets." – Kitty Dukakis

A national survey published in *The Day America Told the Truth*, (Prentice Hall, New York, N.Y. 1991, Patterson and Kim) reveals the true character of the American people. The polls for the survey were taken assuring anonymity to the respondents so the public felt free to reveal itself. The results indicated that, "91% of us lie regularly... The majority of us find it hard to get through a single week without lying. One in five can't make it through a single day--and we are talking about conscious, premeditated lies... Lying does empower us to be people we aren't. It gives us the illusion of control. There are more serious liars right now (liars who do harm) than at any time in our nation's past. Lying has become a cultural trait in America. Lying is embedded in our national character. That hasn't really been understood around the world. Americans lie about everything –and usually for no good reason." The book went on to say that of the remaining 9%, less than half would not lie because it was morally wrong. An obvious conclusion can be drawn from this data that it is not politicians, world bankers, FCC directors, presidents, the press or "someone else" who lie to get control. It is woven throughout the moral fabric of our society.

The government cloaks its secrets under the guise of "national security"; world bankers keep secrets for economic gain; the media protects its "sources" and secrets to keep its "presses" rolling; advertisers censor the news to protect product sales from damaging publicity. Occasionally, those manufacturers allow certain negative information to reach the public about a product, as in the recent Fen-Phen and Redux drug revelation, because to do so gives the appearance of forthrightness – also to do otherwise, in some circumstances, would be more damaging than the truth. One can be assured, however, in the light of the 1991 survey, that concern for the welfare of humanity is not the driving force behind any spasm of necessary honesty by product manufacturers, or any other sector of U.S. culture for that matter.

Can it not be concluded that the news that is finally released is so thoroughly sifted to protect government, corporate and media interests that "state cookies" and "bitten ears" are about the only substantive information that survives?

With 91% of the public habitual liars, according to the aforementioned poll, can one expect anything but intense moral and national sickness from such pervasive national lying? When 91% of a nation is infected with epidemic dishonesty, should it be surprising to witness moral sickness and declination in every part of its society?

"In fact, the way some people talk about trying to do without lies," according to Patterson and Kim, "you'd think that they were smokers trying to get through a day without a cigarette." It appears that the paparazzi, advertisers, multi-national companies and the government all supply the nation with lies just to feed its insatiable hunger for entertainment and frivolity. The citizens of this nation apparently require frequent,

routine injections of lies into their moral bloodstream in order to satisfy a growing addiction to this fantasy and make-believe. Truth has become as unpopular as cold turkey to an addict because it carries with it a natural tendency to sobriety and responsibility.

From the *Protocols* we find an almost prophetic description, written over a hundred years ago, of the lightning rush of society to the brink of eternal ruin:

Every man aims at power, everyone would like to become a dictator if only he could, and rare indeed are the men who would not be willing to sacrifice the welfare of all for the sake of securing their own welfare... In applying our principles let attention be paid to the character of the people in whose country you live... What is the part played by the press today? It serves to excite and inflame those passions which are needed [that already exist] for our purpose... It [the media] is often vapid, unjust, mendacious, and the majority of the public have not the slightest idea what ends the press really serves... Literature and journalism are two of the most important educative forces, and therefore our government will become proprietor of the majority of the journals. This will neutralize the injurious influence of the privately owned press and will put us in possession of the tremendous influence upon the public mind....

In order that the masses may not guess what they themselves are about, we further distract them with amusements, games, pastimes, passions, extravagance and wealth... Growing more and more disaccustomed to reflect and form any opinion of their own, people will begin to talk in the same tone as we because we alone shall be offering them new directions for thought.

The Media Is Only A Mirror

It is easy to point at a governor and laugh at his frivolity. It is easy to point at a large corporation as the perpetrator of media conspiracies. It is easy to point at the new world order conspirators and blame them for our social and cultural sickness. But should the citizens of this nation be looking at a source outside themselves for the problem when it is determined to be the national character – a condition for which the individual is ultimately responsible?

Is it not true that one has only the government one chooses? Withholding the truth and telling lies for gain or security is not what is perpetrated upon us but, rather, what this nation has become. The invisible government is seen only by those with eyes to see. It is an unseen stamp in the forehead (the thinking) and upon the hand (what is done).

"Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead... This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number." Revelation 13:16 & 18.

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