

FCC ruling risky

A Federal Communications Commission ruling was passed on Thursday to the general public by the nation's media with little fanfare, as are many bureaucratic decisions. But because there are ramifications inherent in the decision, we believe it demands closer scrutiny.

By a 4-1 vote, the FCC almost doubled the amount of radio and television stations that can be owned by a single entity, whether it be a company or an individual. And with apparently little foresight the commission also decided to remove all ownership restrictions in 1990.

The FCC adopted a "7-7-7" rule in 1954 that stated that a single company or individual is not allowed to own more than seven AM stations, seven FM stations, and seven television stations. Thursday's ruling set a new standard, a "12-12-12" rule, meaning that a single person or company may now own 36 broadcast stations instead of 21.

When the FCC instituted the "7-7-7" rule it was with the intent of guaranteeing a wide range of broadcast ownership. It is rare when a government agency allows common sense to seep into its decision-making process, but that is what happened to the FCC more than 30 years ago. The logic was that without some restrictions the broadcast media would fall into the hands of a few.

Owning a station can be so profitable that some journalists half-jokingly say that receiving a broadcast license is the same as receiving a permit to print money. It follows that without limitation the larger, more profitable stations will swallow the smaller ones. It's a way of life for businesses in this country. Bob's Superette, just off campus, closed its doors because it couldn't compete with big markets; the corner service station that was owned by the family down the street is now corporate-owned; and the Courtyard is threatened with extinction because Sacred Heart Hospital wants a parking lot.

The FCC was wise to place sanctions on media ownership. While it's unsettling to know that a few major corporations control the country's oil and food supplies, it could be disastrous if broadcast ownership does not remain broad-based.

What is frightening about the prospect of a few individuals or corporations controlling the broadcast media is not what they might say but what they might not say.

History has shown that the power of the press lies in its ability to inform the public not in its editorial stands. A majority of presidents have been elected without the support of the press; FDR, for instance, won one election with two-thirds of the nation's newspapers editorializing against him. People make their own decisions when they have access to pertinent information.

It is that access that is in danger.

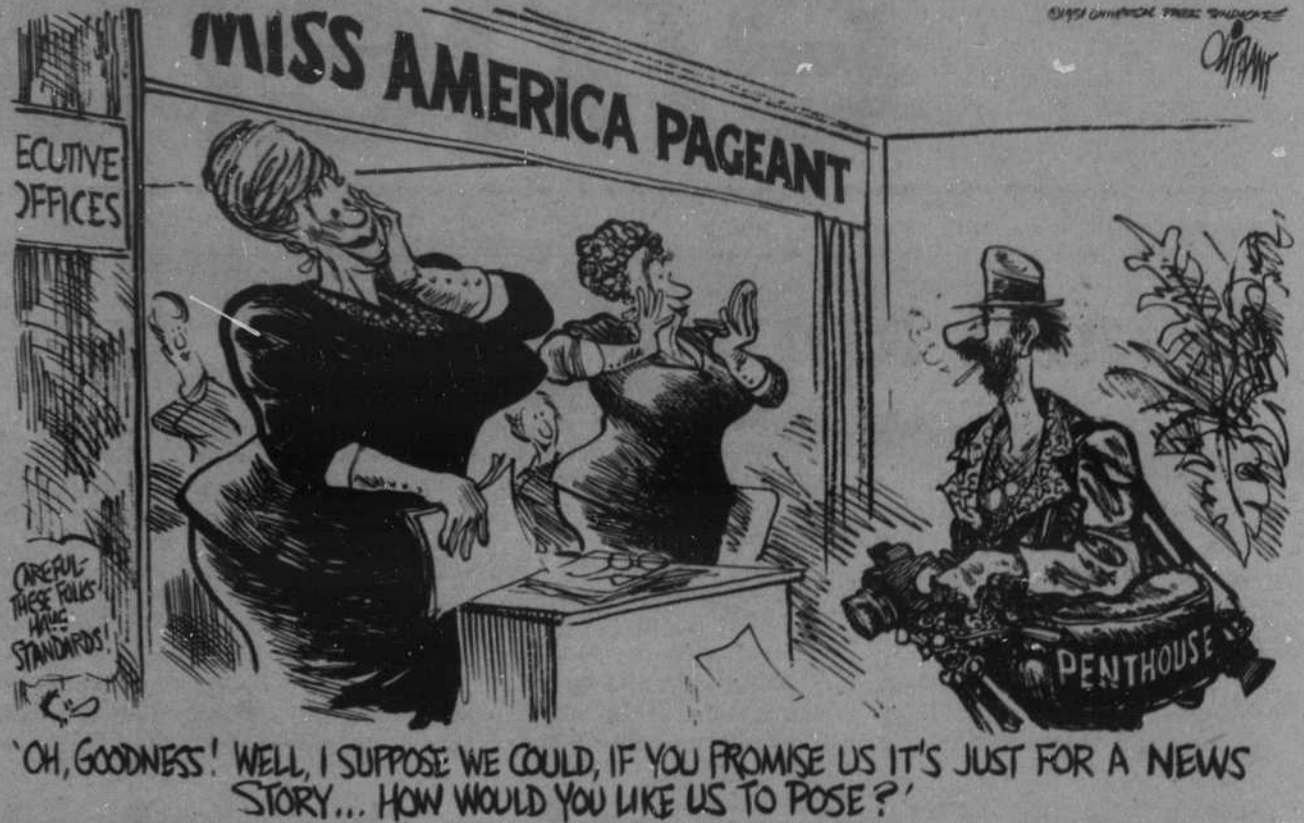
A major role of the media is to serve a "gatekeeping" function. Editors — print and broadcast — are trained to sift the news and they choose which bits of information, facts, news and reports reach the general public. There always is more news available than what is printed or broadcast.

Even without a conscious effort to screen what passes through the "gate," the lords of the press, through time, have fallen into patterns. Network news coverage in the 1950s, the Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer newspaper chains, and the current publishing mogul Rupert Murdoch are but a few of the "gatekeepers" noted for what they allowed or allow into the public domain.

To ensure that the largest variety of news passes through the "gates" it is necessary to maintain a broad base of individuals or companies in control of the media.

The FCC's decision makes it possible for those who already control many "gates" to grow larger and gain even more control.

If that happens, there certainly will be new meaning to the phrase "power of the press."



letters

No compassion

The Democratic Party calls itself the party of compassion. That's rather odd considering the facts.

Every war we've been drawn into this century was under a Democratic administration. These Democrats usually promoted themselves as the "peace" candidate but, alas, actions speak louder than words and the actions of these individuals cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of American men.

Also, even though science proves that unborn children in the womb feel pain at an early stage of development, the liberals who control the Democratic Party support abortion on demand.

And what of human rights? It was Franklin Roosevelt who recognized the Soviet dictatorship in 1933, which was the very year that Stalin murdered more than 7 million Ukrainians. For better or for worse it was Truman who dropped the atomic bombs and it was the Carter/Mondale administration which was silent concerning persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union and which recognized Pol Pot as the legitimate government of Cambodia, even though this Marxist madman killed one-half of the Cambodian population.

The Democratic record speaks for itself. No wonder the Republican Party is growing — especially among the young who, unlike many older people, are more skeptical toward empty slogans and meaningless pro-

paganda intended to manipulate voters.

Michael Cross
Senior,
history, political science

Manipulators

In her opening salvo of attacks on President Reagan, Democratic vice presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro accused the president of being "un-Christain" because he supports cuts in social welfare programs.

"My Bible," said Ferraro in a separate interview with U.S. News & World Report (7/16), "teaches that you have to clothe the naked, feed the hungry and house the homeless." Indeed the Bible does teach that. However, the personal pronoun "you" in Ferraro's statement refers to individual Christians and the church, not to the state.

Yet many well-meaning but biblically ignorant Christians have been guilt-manipulated — through the use of biblical rhetoric about "compassion for the poor" — into supporting a giant welfare state. ("The Bible says 'feed the hungry;' hand over your money!")

A number of Christian scholars (Dr. Gary North, David Chilton and Dr. R.J. Rushdoony) have written incisive and devastating biblical critiques of the "Christian socialism" espoused by pop theologians like Ronald Sider.

In his book "Productive Christians In An Age of Guilt-Manipulators" (a point by point critique of Sider's popular book "Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger"), Chilton relates an illustrative anecdote about a debate between Dr. North and a college professor who espoused the "Christian socialist" line:

"Since he (the professor) was speaking to a seminary au-

dience, his lecture appropriately had three points. First, he said, the individual has a duty to the poor. With an open Bible before him, he admirably defended this from Scripture. Second, he observed, the church has a duty to the poor; again he quoted copiously from Holy Writ. Third, he declared, the state has a duty to the poor. He then picked up the Bible, closed it, and put it aside."

Tom Visoky
Graduate, journalism

Ignore gender

So Mr. Mondale chose a woman for his vice presidential candidate slot. Big deal! A liberal is a liberal regardless of whether they happened to be born with XY chromosomes or the double X variety instead. So don't ask me to vote for someone because his running mate has certain primary and secondary sex characteristics.

I'm going to vote for the person who shares my opinions on the issues. I'm certainly not voting for Mondale (I wouldn't have cared if he chose a hermaphrodite for the ticket) because he's too liberal on everything from criminal justice to defense. And I don't want a return to Carter-style economics either.

I encourage women to study the issues and vote based on who shares their opinions on most issues — not because of gender. After all, if you want that sort of thing to influence your vote, then consider that the only two women in the Senate are Republicans, the only woman on the Supreme Court is Republican, and President Reagan has appointed many women to important posts which were previously the exclusive domain of men.

Lori Parkman

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