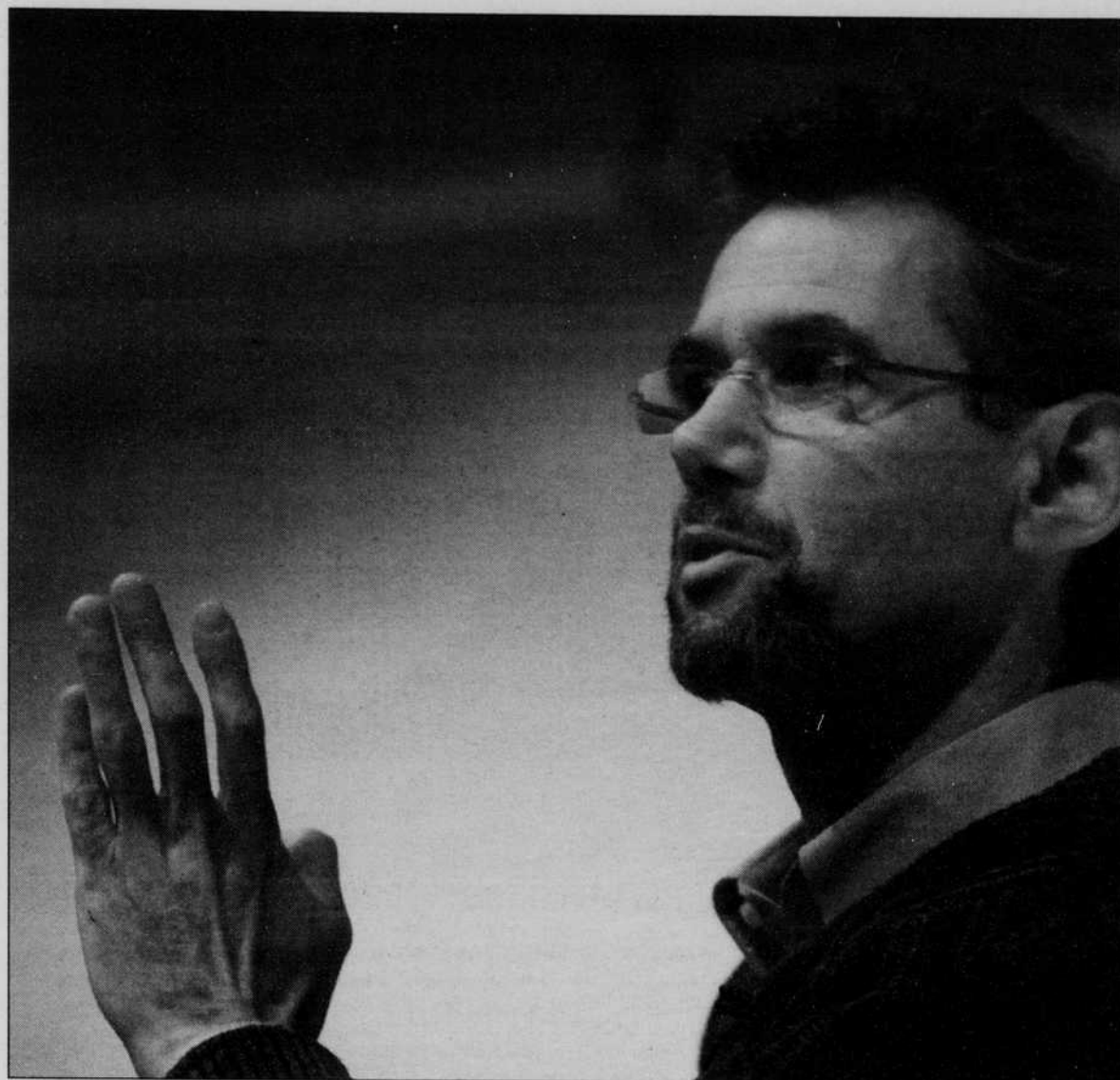




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Former media pundit Jeff Cohen speaks about the myth of liberal media Thursday night in the Lillis Business Complex.

Media expert expounds myths of news coverage

Jeff Cohen also called for more citizen involvement in trying to reform the mainstream media outlets

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

The myth of the liberal media is so great that it threatens to completely squash fair and balanced reporting and the state of democracy in general, a media expert said Thursday night.

Jeff Cohen, co-founder of the media watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting and a former media pundit for FOX and MSNBC, spoke to a crowd of about 75 people, detailing the myths surrounding media outlets and their news coverage and calling for more involvement from citizens in trying to reform mainstream media.

"They take the public's airwaves and restrict the flow of information," Cohen said about the mainstream media.

Cohen, who was the communication director for Dennis Kucinich's campaign for presidency in 2004, used his experiences working for FOX and for MSNBC as fodder for his argument in favor of a greater independent media movement.

"I have a history of hanging out with right-wingers — it was my job," Cohen said during a question-and-

answer session.

Cohen said the "gigantic myth of the liberal media" is exemplified by the blatant right-wing agenda of those who control the mainstream media.

"The number-one fear is the fear of doing anything that would get you and your outlet accused of being liberal," Cohen said.

Cohen gave a brief history of his career with the media and said it was very obvious that people with left-wing views were intended to be overshadowed by right-wingers, describing tactics within the networks involving a mandated ratio of liberal opinions to conservative opinions.

Media conglomeration does not get the attention it deserves because the only outlets equipped to report on the issue are at the center of the issue, Cohen said.

"Most censorship in our country is corporate," Cohen said.

Other countries see their information and news outlets censored by the government, but in the United States, corporate control is such that corporations and the government are basically one and the same, Cohen said.

"The owners of the media would

rather have us be inactive citizens" than informed citizens, Cohen said.

The rise of independent media is possible and is needed now more than ever before, Cohen said.

Cohen outlined three action points citizens can take to try to fight independent journalism's downfall and the rise of corporate control of information.

The first calls for involvement in activist organizations such as FAIR, the second proposes greater activism efforts to produce more independent media outlets and the third asks citizens to actively pursue policy reform at the national level concerning the need for media diversity and less conglomerated mainstream media.

"It's so much easier to build independent media, promote it and distribute it than ever before," Cohen said, citing the decrease in equipment costs the past few years have brought. "Those of us who are information-rich have a duty to those of us that are information-poor."

Eugene citizen Richard Glauber, who said he has two brothers who write for mainstream media outlets, attended Cohen's speech and said he was particularly struck by his speaking skills and his overall message.

"He's like a messenger of how to get more knowledge," Glauber said.

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