

well as the Oregon Supreme Court — interpretation of campaign donations as 'free speech'.)

Technology, in particular satellites, fiberoptics and computers, has enabled the immense growth of communications conglomerates that are instantaneous and global. Multinational corporations, which might be considered private governments that influence and often dominate public governments, are able to transmit and receive data to/from subsidiaries everywhere on earth. They are also able to control and manipulate information pertinent to their activities, which gives them powers unanticipated by the framers of the Constitution whose concerns were limited to the powers of reigning government.

The basic idea of communication in the vast centralized societies of the current era is to profit from the self-interested reflexes of couchpotato masses and to stimulate world markets. Rarely is education or libertarian stimulation given priority or air-time.

Information presented to the American public is in the form of events which is called 'news'. Ideas and opinions in mainstream media are subdivided into editorial sections of newspapers or as commentary segments of radio/TV newscasts. Most women and men in the newsgathering business do not think of themselves as propagandists or ideologues. On the contrary, most of them earnestly attempt the improbability of objective and unbiased recording of events, incidents, facts, and sometimes account for ideas through opinion polls and random surveys. They try to treat the news, in the words of Gene Fowler, as *history shot on the wing*. But of course they reflect the contemporary and cultural biases of their society and ultimately of the industry they serve — The Media, an intertangled mafia of smoke and mirrors to which truth is ephemeral, chimerical and expendable, an item of profit and loss. The insidious aspect of the pursuit of objectivity as the cornerstone of modern journalism is that inevitably the form is used to disguise and project very partisan ideas and perspectives by those who manage and rule society and own the major media.

The corporations "sitting on the windpipe of the 1st Amendment," as Jeff Cohen of FAIRE calls them, project the nurtured myth of a "left/liberal" media, which has a purpose of intimidating working journalists (most of whom are, after all, corporate employees) to avoid liberalism as a professional plague. If indeed there is a left/liberal media in the USA it would critically examine bloated Pentagon budgets, Star Wars, oil drilling in natural preserves, *'laissez fairy tales'* (Norman Solomon's phrase) aid to dependent corporations.

The real purpose of the press/media is little understood, which is as much its own fault as it is from public skepticism and distrust. The people expect event and spectacle, which are ardently chronicled, and the infotainment mediocrity provides instant celebrity and fashion (as well as scandal) as instantly recycled and refashioned. But the central function of the media is to act as the public conscience and critical watchdog of authority — the cry of alarm when authority is exceeded or corrupt. It must act as a forum and instrument of public dialogue and debate, presenting differing views, even as U. S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "expressions of opinion that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death."

The Media in all its hydra forms does an inadequate job. It is probably impossible to examine, publish and broadcast the billions of bits of data generated every day. There is too much to write about, to televise and report, to think about, to debate and discuss; and it moves too quickly, changes too rapidly to pin down well enough or process adequately.

In response to the impossible glut of information, a significant trend in media traffic is paradoxically toward specific, or more ominously, specialized audiences. Mainstreaming more often seems to mean segmenting into selective user groups that become hermetically sealed by appropriate media.



WILLIAM MICHAEL SCHUSTER ('CAROL')

Consolidation and distortion of a free press have continually given rise to small newspapers and magazines, and to independent radio stations such as Astoria's KMUN-FM and Portland's KBOO, whose only allegiance is to the 1st Amendment. (National Public Broadcasting, highly praised and severely criticized, is buffeted by corporate aspirations and political sabotage.) The independent media, which has few pretensions toward objectivity and fewer illusions about its probability, provides an insistent and vital forum that megamedia ignores for the exchange, analysis, understanding and argument of issues that are at the base of every culture and society. Its lineage reaches back to the rough and prickly press that gave birth to the 1st Amendment, and though it seldom reflects popular opinion and operates on the cultural edge where megamedia fears to go, independent micromedia is powered by the belief that if it does not remain free nothing soon afterward will be free.

No one should ever be surprised that a government does not encourage liberty or independent opinion among its subjects. Democracies are elaborate power balances between diverse parties that constantly seek advantage over the others. A most important assumption of a democracy is that the flow of information should not be tampered with nor be restricted if democracy is to survive the incessant tugs of war between its parties. But of course interfering with and manipulating information is among the highest priorities of political power which accurately assumes the general populace will not give much thought to mind control efforts most of the time.

People who listen to independent radio stations like KMUN wish for more than babble shrieking from their radios and viewers of public broadcasting search for more than the drivel and schlock beamed to the masses by commercial networks. Yet intimidation by the FCC, the gestating ministry of truth Orwell predicted would rise to be the temple of the state,

suppresses creativity and controversy. Risk taking, essential to creativity and independence, shrivels to mumbles of acquiescence. We should remember Orwell: He invented a language, *Newspeak*, which was based on erasing unwanted ideas in the pretense of simplifying the public dialogue. He warned that what is removed from language is forgotten in the individual and collective mind.

Orwell was wrong, though, when he suggested that a propaganda system depended upon violent coercion. Instead, in a post-Orwellian world we suffer the benign control of a powerful system of indoctrination and propaganda that needs little coercion to set an agenda for what people will think about.

Policing public morality, claiming of course that it is only being reflected, is usually an indecently popular and effective method of intruding control over what we read in our newspapers, listen to on our radios and view on our televisions, and are ultimately persuaded to accept as truth and reality when in reality our vision has been distorted, our perception atrophied, as are our personal values and liberties. There is no single right or truth, nor is there a single wrong or deceit. Shades fog every issue, denying absolutes no matter how insistently projected.

A free and open flow of information regardless of ideology or opinion, despite the strenuous labor of separating truth from fiction, deceit, gossip and obscenity — information from disinformation — is quite truthfully the only method of preserving what remains of our freedoms and the only chance to enlarge them in a turbulent world that is still recoiling from the collapse of a morbidly tyrannical and static empire that claimed to be a dictatorship of the people.

The 1st Amendment is unequivocal: *nothing* shall abridge freedom of speech, therefore freedom of thought. It is our distinguishing ideal, unfortunately more in theory than actuality. Not our wealth or world power nor our system of acquisition and consumption is as important as the inspired attempt to reverse history and make it possible for people to be equal and independent under laws of their own choice.

Judge Learned Hand should have the last word: "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it."

This article has been cobbled together from many others written over the years; a suite of synthesis

## SHOULD THE *TIMES EAGLE* EXIST?

BY ROBERT STANLEY NEED

It has really been an exciting week, again, at the *Times Eagle* building in Wheeler. Last Friday it was necessary to relinquish our telephone communications because we just couldn't pay for them. At the same time, we had to relinquish the services of the most expert Editor in our brief, tempestuous history — Terry Blevins. The same reason applied to the departure of Blevins that applied to the telephone, we couldn't afford to keep him alive. Long-suffering but tough Ken O'Toole, features and Tillamook County news for over 18 months, has given notice that this is his last issue. Bill Mullock, the darling of Cannon Beach and Seaside, has found the only way to get closer to food is to get a job in a restaurant.

The bitterness that can and does attack journalists is ... more than understandable among the profession universally, but underscored to an inestimable degree when you are actually sacrificing your life and means of livelihood to build a totally "independent" newspaper. Summed up, the events of the past week graphically pose the question: the *Times Eagle* — should it survive?

The answer, of course, is 'No'. The *Times Eagle* may gracefully suspend when it has fulfilled some form of reward to all of the 80 persons of all ages who have given to the very of their stamina to create and keep the paper alive.

The answer, of course, is 'No'. The *Times Eagle* can cease publication when it has effectively established a communications forum among the coastal communities, its citizens and those who love the Oregon coast from afar, that assures forever the proper use and maintenance of its lands and resources. When intelligence and love, consideration of others and preservation of life-sustaining processes, rather than self-service, commercial greed, and the putrescence of political manipulation, are the accepted and normal criteria of coastal life, then there is no need for the *North Coast Times Eagle*.

The answer, of course, is 'No'. There is no need for a *Times Eagle* when the other members of the coastal media reestablish priorities and face head-on the acute and dangerous problems in their own communities that are, in truth, contaminating the community next door, forming festers that affect the state, and in the end poison the whole fabric of American society. When publishers are respected for their truth and courage instead of their presence at the Elks Club, when they are brave enough to warn subscribers about unsafe and dangerous commercial products instead of grovel at the feet of national

and local vendors, when the balance of public thought is more important than the balances at the bank, then there will be no need for the *North Coast Times Eagle*.

The answer, of course, is 'No'. There is no necessity for continued publication when the *Times Eagle* has achieved its holiest goal, that being its repeated obsession to find means to divert community thinking and endeavor back to what it considers the most important of the Declaration of Independence's inalienable rights, "The pursuit of happiness."

Since none of these goals have been obtained, there is no other recourse than to fight on and on. It would be so much easier to give our subscription records to another newspaper to fulfill these outstanding contracts.

But to thousands of incredibly faithful readers, the normal standards of publication conduct do not apply. At the top of every front page of every newspaper is its "flag," that often decorative name, volume number, and date of the publication. Because of constant usage of the term, it has lost a great deal of its significance among newspaper people in general. A few weeks ago, a reader said that the *Times Eagle* building in Wheeler should be "known as besieged Fort Wheeler."

If so, then we are flattered by the simile and accept it. "Fort Wheeler" still stands, cut off from the communications of a modern world, its casualties continuing to mount, its remaining defenders starved for proper composing, layout and photographic supplies and equipment, and, in truth, for even the means to sustain adequate physical living.

But "Fort Wheeler" still stands today. Its flag is firmly nailed to the flagstaff, its motto *To Serve All People* remaining a tattered but still valiant bright spot against the dark storm clouds of a saddened society.

We seriously considered and fought over going into total suspension this week. But someone climbed the flagpole and came back down grumbling, "Oh hell, the damn thing's stuck up there forever." So be it.

(July 11, 1974)

Robert Stanley Need was the founding Father of the *North Coast Times Eagle*, which he first began publishing 30 years ago, in May 1971. The original *Times Eagle* folded 5 years later, in 1976, and was resurrected three years later. This issue is the 22nd anniversary of the newspaper's revival.

