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BACK TO CAMPUS

American people. It's indeed possible to team up and take our country back.

EW: You also had a radio show, but Disney didn't like you criticizing capitalism so you were knocked off. Any thoughts on trying to reclaim radio and other mass media?

JH: In August 1995, I criticized the passage of the telecommunications act that allowed greater concentration of the airwaves. That's when Disney took over ABC. I went on the air that Saturday and lambasted both of those actions as inevitably going to lead to more domination and less democratic discourse and I had a Mickey Mouse character work for me. My show was on ABC and Disney didn't have a great sense of humor about that. It wasn't

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-Jim Hightower

really a function of that — it was just a little bit of fun — but the fact that the Disneys, Clear Channels and other conglomerates don't want any on-air discussion of money and corporate power. Within six weeks I was off the air. But I came back on within a year with a daily two-hour weekday talk show. I quit doing that show in late 2000 when I sensed what was going on in the countryside and I wanted to be more connected to that activism, which meant traveling.

Now, as my book is proving, we have a whole lot more media outreach than we realize; it's in little bits and pieces: independent media, websites, community bookstores. When you connect that up you actually reach tens of millions of Americans.

The issue of media concentration has got to be a central part of the new politics put forward. The willingness of the public to support that was shown in response to the FCC effort this summer to impose new ownership rules of the airwaves that would further lock up our democratic outlets. Community radio really led the charge on this, like Paul Revere. On the Internet, Moveon.org and Truemajority.org sent a deluge of protests to Congress and in August the House voted 400 to 230 to overturn the FCC rules and the Senate voted 59 to 41 likewise. Bush says he'll veto it, but we'll see. Here's an example of a fight over an arcane issue of media ownership rules by an obscure

agency of the government that people got involved in and essentially have won.

EW: Other issues have also been won by word of mouth. In fact, you mention in your book that kitchen tables are the setting for many a burgeoning grassroots movement. Terry Tempest Williams says all the good work is being started at dinner parties. Your scene's a bit more downhome to me. Here they'd be munching on chips and tofu paté. What about in Texas?

JH: Chips and salsa. I very much believe in kitchen table democracy. We need more potluck suppers and festivals so politics is not boring — so it becomes a part of our social existence.

EW: You were a Nader supporter. Would you support him again, knowing everything you do now about the Bushites?

JH: An unanswerable question. It never occurred to me that Gore could actually lose to that dweeb — and in fact, he didn't — but he ran the worst presidential campaign in Democratic Party history. Nader was the best Democrat in the race. He was the only one saying what the party should have been saying.

EW: Who would you choose now: Kucinich, Dean, or someone else?

JH: I haven't really chosen anybody. We've got a blessing of Democratic candidates this time. At one level or another, they're raising the progressive, populist, Democratic flag. Kucinich is raising it to the maximum, but with Dean on health care and the war and other issues, he's also running as an unabashed Democrat. Even the more establishment candidates, like Clark, Kerry and Gephardt are certainly raising different progressive issues. So the American public, particularly those who have not been voting, can begin to hear their issues in the public debate and that can only work to our advantage.

But we've gotta quit thinking somebody running for president is going to create a progressive movement and we as progressives need to use the candidates rather than letting them use us. We must applaud anything progressive they say and give those issues and voices as much exposure as we can. And then unite behind whoever comes out to defeat Bush because those people are nuts and they're dangerous.

We've gotta take the power out of those plutocratic, autocratic hands. But we can't fool ourselves that that's a progressive victory; that only gets us back to ground zero, to where we can focus on the issues we want to put forth — to have the world we want to see. **EW**

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