

Nov. 4, 1997

Executive Director  
*Sut Jhally*

Director of Development  
*Thomas N. Gardner*

Director of Marketing  
*Sophy Craze*

**Board of Advisors**

*Noam Chomsky*

*Jeff Cohen*

*Susan Douglas*

*Michael Eric Dyson*

*Susan Faludi*

*George Gerbner*

*Todd Gitlin*

*Stuart Hall*

*bell hooks*

*Jean Kilbourne*

*Cornel West*

*John Edgar Wideman*

*Naomi Wolf*

Dear George,

Greetings. We are pleased to enclose your royalty payment of \$664.90 for the second quarter of 1997, and we apologize for its tardiness.

I am also writing to ask a favor. We are in that deep valley between huge expenditures for marketing materials at the beginning of the school year (including sending the enclosed catalog to 115,000 people) and realizing the revenues from that marketing. This cash flow crunch means we have had to borrow money both for marketing costs and operating funds. Within a month or so, based on past experience, we should be back in a positive cash flow.

What we would like to propose is that rather than have to pay interest to a bank to cover the next royalty payments, we would prefer to pay you the interest for a one-month delay in making the payment. Your third quarter payment, which would be due on the 15th. of November would be paid instead on December 15 and we would add to it a month's interest at 8% per annum. If you would prefer for tax purposes to delay receipt of payment until the first week of January, we would be happy to oblige and would then add two months interest to the January 15 payment.

Your royalty payment for the third quarter will be \$860.12.

If this arrangement is okay with you, you need take no action; we will proceed with it. If, however, you do not wish to delay the payment, or would prefer to delay it until January 15, please advise me with a call or e-mail to [tng@comm.umass.edu](mailto:tng@comm.umass.edu). Thanks for your understanding through this temporary dip in cash flow. The road ahead looks brighter.

Sincerely,



Tom Gardner  
Managing Director

11/06/97

**Media Education Foundation**  
**Summary Sales by Item**  
April through June 1997

	Apr - Jun '97			
	<u>Qty</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>% of Sales</u>	<u>Avg Price</u>
<b>Parts</b>				
<b>G2A</b>	19.00	3,132.50	106.7%	164.87
<b>G3A</b>	1.00	195.00	6.6%	195.00
<b>Total Parts</b>		3,327.50	113.4%	
<b>Service</b>				
<b>Shipping</b>	16.00	80.00	2.7%	5.00
<b>Total Service</b>		80.00	2.7%	
<b>Discounts</b>				
<b>Discount</b>	0.00	-472.89	-16.1%	*overflow*
<b>Total Discounts</b>		-472.89	-16.1%	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<u>2,934.61</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	

Date: Mon, 23 Mar 1998 09:56:55 -0500 (EST)  
From: Thomas N Gardner <tng@comm.umass.edu>  
Subject: Re: Why did the chicken cross the road?  
To: ggerbner@nimbus.ocis.temple.edu (George Gerbner)  
Cc: mmorgan@wilde.oit.umass.edu (Michael Morgan)  
MIME-version: 1.0

George - thanks for the chicken crossing road material, but the most important one was missed.

Gerbner: It crossed the road to get away from a situation where for the first time in chicken history, baby chicks are hatched into coops where the television is on 24 hours a day, and where stories are told not by mommy chicks with something to tell, but by a handful of mass-producing poultry conglomerates with something (like its body parts and its unborn children) to sell.

Tom Gardner  
tng@mediaed.org

August 11, 1998

Executive Director  
Sut JhallyManaging Director  
Thomas N. Gardner**Board of Advisors**

Noam Chomsky

Jeff Cohen

Susan Douglas

Michael Eric Dyson

Susan Faludi

George Gerbner

Todd Gitlin

Stuart Hall

bell hooks

Jean Kilbourne

Cornel West

John Edgar Wideman

Naomi Wolf

**George Gerbner**  
234 Golf View Road  
Ardmore, PA 19003-1002

Rec'd 1/25/99

Dear George,

Greetings. Hope your summer is going well. I am writing about your MEF royalty.

This is the letter that I promised, at least to myself, that I would never have to write again, but we have yet to break out of this cyclical problem of a summer cash slump in the face of gargantuan marketing costs in early fall.

I had attempted to solve this problem by squirreling away in a separate account enough money to cover royalties. That worked last time. But last week, we were hit with a one-time financial emergency that, given the low cash flow, required us using all funds available.

Although the year-around figures for the past fiscal year show us about breaking even (although with a heavy debt load), the current cash picture is a tough one. We have to get the marketing materials out in September or the whole ball of wax falls apart, and we have to make payroll in August and September as well as meet fixed costs like rent and debt payments.

The only way we can do that is if we ask you once again (and hopefully for the last time) to defer your royalty payment of \$4,657.90, due August 15, until January 15, 1999. As we did last time we asked folks for this extension, we will add 8% annual interest to the payment in January. If you prefer getting the payment in this tax year, we would be glad to make it on December 15 instead.

Sincerely,


Tom Gardner  
tng@mediaed.org

26 Center Street  
Northampton, MA 01060  
VOICE: (413) 584-8500  
FAX: (413) 586-8398  
mediaed@mediaed.org  
<http://www.mediaed.org>

Date: Thu, 04 Feb 1999 00:41:13 -0500 (EST)  
From: Thomas N Gardner <tng@comm.umass.edu>  
MIME-Version: 1.0  
Precedence: bulk  
Sender: owner-cem-net@igc.org  
Subject: Re: New Topic  
To: cem-net@igc.apc.org  
Status:

Frank and fellow cem-netters,

My main purpose here is to respond, partially at least, to Frank's suggestion for a new topic about the media - intentional conspiracy or human error. (Warning: I know his tagline says "new topic" but Noam Chomsky remains omnipresent in media analysis and

cannot be escaped. I should also warn about dangerous segues ahead, but you have to read way to the end to get to them.) I want to respond two ways to Frank's questions about whether we should critique the media for its human foibles within "well-meaning standards" or for more deliberate errors born from structure and design.

First, and my working journalist background shows in choosing this as first, I think it is true that editors and reporters have to make subjective news judgments about what rates as news, what makes page 1 or the lead story, and then what to include or exclude from a piece. So the end content of news media is certainly shaped by all those decisions made in thousand of different ways by an equivalent number of people. They may all be following the same cookbook, but some use more salt, others more pepper, and some garlic.

Those decisions, however, are, for the most part, made within either a perceived and understood tunnel of allowable perspective or an unconscious set of notions consistent with dominant ideology. When I was a political reporter for the Montgomery Advertiser in Alabama, I knew that I could not write the same way or even often about the same things as I could when writing an article for the Great Speckled Bird, Virginia Weekly, New South Student, Southern Patriot, or any of the national left publications

I had written for over the previous 15 years of activism in the South. Sure, I would try to slip in whatever I could within the confines and rules of acceptable mainstream journalism, but, to me, the fences were palpable and clear. In fact, when I was hired at the Advertiser, the editor had on his desk a press release I had written from a defense committee I had organized for someone on Alabama's death row. (A conservative reporter had tried to scuttle my hiring by slipping it to him). He just wanted to know if I could make the transition from "advocacy to straight journalism." I assured him I knew the difference and had a nearly completed graduate degree in journalism to prove it. I was hired on the condition that in the first year at least, I wouldn't write on the death penalty. Most of my colleagues had never entertained any notions of radically altering the socio-economic system, and wrote comfortably within the acceptable parameters, internalized as their own.

On the other hand, that paper had earned a national reputation and a Pulitzer or two for opposing the hard-core segregationist policies and rhetoric of George Wallace. And, yes, it even lost a few advertisers in the process. In the same manner, as someone

mentioned earlier, some of the national media has taken on the tobacco industry in spite of losing ad revenue, while others have cowed before the altar of greed and the threat of lawsuits. One has to wonder if the story would have been the same if tobacco

o had been allowed to keep a large hand in broadcast advertising. In some cases, the pressure works. In other cases, a certain level of conflict is permissible, (excluding anything threatening to the dominance of the market system as a whole). I agree with Peter's oft-stated position that activists should always try to exploit any of that interstitial and oppositional space left to them in the mainstream media. You never know when the reporter you are talking to might even be an old activist turned journalist just looking for a good, juicy quote.

In many cases, though, direct sponsor pressure overcomes better editorial judgment. In other cases, like the Fox TV censorship of good investigative reporting on Monsanto's BGH in Florida dairy cows (check the Web Site - FoxBGHSuit.com), cozy ideological soulmates merely have to pick up the phone and call. How much pressure do we think really had to be applied by Monsanto's legal team to get the Fox director of news, Roger Ailes (Rush Limbaugh's Dr. Frankenstein), to scuttle the reporters' efforts to let parents know what was going on their kids' cereal?

In that Florida case, which will come to trial this spring, (the reporters, Steve Wilson and Jane Akre, are suing under Florida's whistleblower protection law), a good story that would have met any decent editor's criteria for a dynamite story, was demolished, along with the careers of two very good journalists. Is that case an anomaly? Or are reporters and editors getting clearer and clearer messages that the big boys in the corporate offices are in charge and your reporting should not offend them? And, as the media becomes more and more concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, is the level of what was once permissible but still constrained diversity becoming even more constricted?

That is one set of questions. But it would be less than complete to seek the answers only in chasing down one real, smoking gun story or another, and then positing strictly the narrow conspiracy argument of direct censorship and control.

One example -- the ABC 20/20 story on Mumia Abu Jamal by Sam Donaldson. It was pure, prosecutorial propaganda - not journalism. Was there a meeting between the police organizations and Disney execs to decide to bring in one of the network's big guns to shoot down a growing defense effort for Mumia? I am not saying there wasn't such a meeting or discussion; there may well have been. But it wouldn't have been necessary. The Donaldsons of the world get to the top because they know what their job is on behalf

of the system. They are not journalists, but high ministers of culture and information. And when NPR silences Mumia's commissioned interviews and refuses to air Martin Espada's solicited poem because it focuses on Mumia's case, they offer themselves as erstwhile candidates for that ministerial clique. Framing, whether in a legal or media sense, involves both what is left outside the frame (SILENCING) and what is filtered into the center of it (SELECTIVITY). When you look at a piece like Donaldson's hatchet job, it is a stretch to conclude it results from merely bad journalistic judgment or human error within well-meaning standards. Is it intentional conspiracy? Perhaps. But in some ways it doesn't matter whether the smoking phone call or conversation is located. (In this case, there actually is a pretty telling letter from a 20/20 producer to prison officials asking for an interview with Mumia and suggesting ABC can be trusted because they are working closely with the policeman's widow and police organizations.) Of course, I should also add there are plenty of examples of just plain bad

reporting. My colleague at MEF, Sut Jhally, is always asking, "Is it natural ignorance or intentional ignorance?"

Those examples (along with many others) illustrate the point, but they are neither essential nor sufficient to understanding the role of the news media.

It is the commercial nature of the entire media system, not just a matter of who owns this or that media outlet, or even how concentrated that ownership is ultimately, that determines the function of news given to us through that system. Example: The U.S.

leads the world in incarceration. Has the media contributed to this situation by persuading the American public that their lives are in grave danger from the "criminal element" - especially the dark-skinned criminal element? Yes. Did that media effect result from a conspiracy between media execs and the early pioneers of the multi-million dollar Prison-Industrial Complex or the politicians on the right who have ridden the law-and-order horse to power and used it to turn the nation's political culture to the right? It is not necessary to answer the question.

Why? Because it is the commercial nature of the system that has generated a media landscape of both dramatic violence and sensationalized news reporting of violence which together foster what George Gerbner calls the "mean world syndrome" (i.e., the belief held more so by frequent TV viewers than by those who watch less TV, that world is a mean and scary place, requiring Draconian laws to reign in the threat to law and order and personal security.)

There is a prolific body of work on this point by Gerbner and others in the Cultural Indicators Project (Michael Morgan, Nancy Signorelli, Larry Gross, et al), the longest on-going and most thorough study of media effects ever done. But another accessible

way into that work is through a series of three videos with George on the Media and Culture, put out by the Media Education Foundation ([www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)). (I warned you about dangerous segues.) Many of you, if you teach, may have already used them or seen them. If not, I suggest you preview them (for free) and try to get your school, if you are so affiliated, or organization or library to buy them (and use them as a basis for a discussion group on media and culture).

Last year, we produced a video that deals with the political economy of the media as the key determinant in how news is filtered. It features, guess who, Noam Chomsky (you just can't get away from his analysis, Frank, but, hey, I am not telling you to read all of his work just watch a little more TV). The video, entitled, MYTH OF THE LIBERAL MEDIA, also includes Edward Herman, strong visuals, and introductions and transitions by Justin Lewis (U.Mass. prof. and president of the MEF Board). We also sub-distribute "Fear and Favor in the Newsroom."

As long as I seem to have just, ahem, strayed on to the topic of MEF videos, I should mention the other new videos we released this past fall. They are: OFF THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW: LESBIANS, GAYS, AND BISEXUALS ON TELEVISION; EDWARD SAID ON ORIENTALISM; and REVIVING OPHELIA: SAVING THE SELVES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS, with Mary Pipher, author of the best-selling book by that title. We are currently working on one with Jackson Katz called "Tough Guise: Media Images and the Crisis in Masculinity." It should be ready in June. Another one that has been very well received is Sut Jhally's video, "Advertising and the End of the World."

I know it seems a bit ironic to end this anti-commercialism message with a

commercial, but we are non-profit (with a vengeance). Institutional sales are what keep us going and able to make the next video, so if there is any way you can secure institutional

l purchases of these or our other videos on the media, we would appreciate it (and so will the students and others who get to see them). To check prices and listings of all of them, go to [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org). The Web Site also has a study guide for the Gerbne

r series and several of the others. Or if you want a printed catalog or a preview of a particular tape, you can send an e-mail request to [mediaed@mediaed.org](mailto:mediaed@mediaed.org), or call 800-697-0089. I'll post a notice, or find another segue, when the Katz video is done.

Sorry this was so long, but since I usually jump out of my lurking shadow to actually write something about once a year, I hoped you wouldn't mind.

Hope to see some of you at the convention.

Tom Gardner  
Managing Director  
Media Education Foundation  
CEM Board Member  
[tng@mediaed.org](mailto:tng@mediaed.org)