

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Introducing The Open Media Pamphlet Series

In early 1991, while U.S. bombs were striking Baghdad, Greg Ruggiero and Stuart Sahulka—two then-unemployed Rutgers University graduates—stood on New York City street corners and subway platforms distributing pamphlets they had transcribed from a speech given by Noam Chomsky entitled “On U.S. Gulf Policy.” They found that people on the street wanted to know why we were going to war, why negotiations were not being pursued, and what was the real meaning behind the propaganda of the war. Ultimately, more than 20,000 copies of “On U.S. Gulf Policy” were distributed, placing it on the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* bestseller list for two consecutive months. And thus, the Open Media Pamphlet Series was born.

What began as a protest against the Gulf War blossomed into a full-fledged venture, as the series grew to include more than 30 titles, featuring writing on crucial world events by some of the foremost progressive thinkers of our time. Five of these titles have made it on to the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* and other bestseller lists.

Now, Open Media has teamed up with Seven Stories Press, which will publish new Open Media pamphlets as affordable (\$4.95) 64-96 page paperbacks, providing the same timely coverage of hot-button issues.

With the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the consolidation of media outlets under the control of a few corporate conglomerates is one of the overriding issues of our time. Never before has the accuracy and reliability of mainstream reporting been so much in question. The first two books in the Open Media Pamphlet Series directly address this critical situation.



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# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Open Media Pamphlet #1  
Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy  
Robert W. McChesney

"Robert McChesney has sounded a compelling warning that corporate control of the mass media has made ominous inroads into our democracy."  
—BEN BAGDIKIAN

"In this passionate and strikingly lucid essay, Robert McChesney makes clear why all of us should be alarmed about the effects of media mergers on the future of American democracy. This is must reading for anyone who wants to get a quick understanding of this troubling trend, and for all Americans concerned about these media giants' corrosive effects on public discourse and communal values—not just in our country, but around the world." —SUSAN J. DOUGLAS, author, *Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*

"What's wrong with having the U.S. media controlled by a handful of corporations, which happen to be among the largest corporations on earth? In Robert McChesney's closely reasoned, lucidly argued analysis, the result of this concentration of power is that we get a range of views not much wider than that permitted in the old Soviet press—though of course cunningly tarted out with trivia and trash. There's no hope for democracy, he concludes, unless the media can be pried free from the sticky fingers of the billionaire class."  
—BARBARA EHRENREICH

"Robert McChesney's urgent call-to-action tells us not only what's wrong with today's media and why, but also the history of how we got here. He exposes the fable of the 'liberal media' and the structural defects of U.S. 'public' broadcasting. McChesney is that rare academic who can wield historical insight on behalf of activism and democratic reform."  
—JEFF COHEN, *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*

A national media market is emerging that is dominated by fewer than 10 enormous conglomerates. Robert W. McChesney traces the emergence of this media monopoly and describes the activities of the main corporate players, and how the Internet is being incorporated into the system.

- While the traditional Western concern is with *government* control of the media, McChesney discusses how, in fact, corporate commercial control is every bit as dangerous.
- Of corporate media giants, activist George Gerbner states that they have "nothing to tell, but plenty to sell." McChesney shows how, although there is much good created by the corporate media machine, it has become an entirely commercial enterprise.

— MORE —



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- Although the Internet has provided important space for activists hamstrung by traditional commercial media, McChesney warns that the rapid commercialization of cyberspace, combined with access limitations, will prevent the Internet from becoming the bastion of democratic media some hope it to be.

- The debate over the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was largely a farce, where the only "debate" was over which communications conglomerates should gain most from deregulation.

- McChesney examines how media conglomeration compromises democracy: "The corporate media/communications system may well be the defining feature of the global market economy. A main trend of global capitalism is that it undermines not only national sovereignty, but also popular sovereignty, as societies seem compelled to obey the dictates of global markets or face immediate and stern economic punishment."

He then warns of the consequences when government allows politics (i.e. the will of the people) to take a back seat to the concerns of business: "Political debate, like democracy, will then be irrelevant....Our task is to push in the opposite direction, to create a public sphere and democratic media that can harness the creative validity of our people and infuse it into our politics and culture. It is the push for genuine self-government. It is a necessary step toward building a fair, humane, and sustainable society." —from *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*

Robert W. McChesney is an Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is author of the award-winning *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy*, and the soon-to-be-released *Global Media* with Edward Herman.

80 pages 4 1/4 x 6 3/4

\$4.95 Trade Paperback ISBN: 1-888363-47-9

Publication Date: May 7, 1997.

## THE FIRST STONE

## APPEAL TO REASON

By Joel Bleifuss

I regularly question the decision I made a decade ago to make a career of alternative journalism. But just as often, something comes along that convinces me that it was the right choice, despite the poor pay, lack of retirement benefits and absence of job security that many of us endure.

Recently, three things have blown away my doubts about working in the alternative press: *Fear and Favor in the Newsroom*, a documentary video; *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*, a pamphlet by Robert McChesney; and *Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television*, a book by David Thelen.

*Fear and Favor in the Newsroom* is an hour-long documentary by Bay-area filmmakers Beth Sanders and Randy Backer (distributed by California Newsreel in San Francisco). Narrated by Studs Terkel, the film recounts the stories of journalists from both the print and electronic media who were forced from their jobs for doing them a little too well. The film's message, delivered in the words of Terkel, is simple enough: "If journalists cannot freely report news which disturbs the wealthy and the powerful, then we'll learn only what the big boys want us to learn and they'll make our decisions for us."

*Fear and Favor* tells the story of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution's* hard-hitting editor Bill Kovatch. Under his leadership, the paper won a 1989 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporter Bill Dedman's exposé of race-biased lending practices at Atlanta banks. A year earlier, the *Journal-Constitution* had run a story detailing a grand jury's investigation into allegations that Coca-Cola had bribed Soviet officials. According to Wendell Rawls Jr., an ex-assistant managing editor at the paper, at a Coca-Cola board meeting shortly after the article appeared, a director stood up and asked Anne Cox Chambers, a fellow board member and one of the *Journal-Constitution's* owners, why her editor had a "take-

no-prisoners policy for covering business."

In 1992, Kovatch was forced out and Dedman and Rawls resigned. With the *Journal-Constitution's* next editor, former *USA Today* executive editor Ron Martin, things went better for Coke. In 1994, for example, the paper gave front-page coverage to a speech by Coca-Cola chairman Roberto Goizueta to business leaders. In an exemplary feat of sycophancy, the paper also reprinted Goizueta's speech in its entirety and honored it as the subject of an editorial.

*Fear and Favor* also examines blood on the floor at the *New York Times*. Editors there punished investigative consumer reporter Frances Cerra for her tenacious coverage of the Shoreham nuclear power plant owned by the Long Island Light Company (LILCO). In 1982, she wrote that the company's financial situation was so dire that it might be forced into bank-

ruptcy. Her editor at the *Times* killed the story, explaining, "We can't print a story like that. It will affect LILCO stock." Cerra protested to her editor's superior, Peter Millones. She recalls: "Peter Millones got on the phone and his opening statement to me was, 'I hear you're causing trouble.' It went downhill from there, and right on the spot he said, 'Fine, you're no longer assigned to Long Island. Report into the city tomorrow.' So I was summarily yanked from that beat." Within a year, LILCO stopped paying dividends.

"I came to understand that freedom of the press is only guaranteed when you own the press," says Cerra. "This is something I learned from the *New York Times*."

The public domain at PBS is also fraught with peril. Consider the case of *The Kwitney Report with Jonathan Kwitney*, which debuted on PBS in 1988. Kwitney, a former investigative reporter at the *Wall Street Journal*, made his name in the '70s investigating the CIA. In one segment, Kwitney chronicled the assassinations of Guatemalan labor-union leaders targeted for trying to organize workers at American-owned factories. At a Coca-Cola plant, for example, more than a dozen union leaders were killed. Predictably enough, *The Kwitney Report* failed to attract corporate and foundation sponsors, and was canceled for that reason in 1989.

Despite its problems, Robert McChesney argues in *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy* (Seven Stories Press, 1997), public broadcasting is a forum that must be vigorously defended. McChesney, a journalism professor at the University of Wisconsin, has produced a 74-page pamphlet that, in the tradition of Tom Paine, systematically examines and refutes the myths that provide the "impenetrable ideological armor" protecting corporate media from criticism.

In fact, McChesney calls on us to go further, and formulate a public policy that would create "a well-funded, inde-

pendent journalism, cultural and communication system." "Our task," he writes, "is to push in the opposite direction, to create a public sphere and democratic media that can harness the creative vitality of our people and infuse it into our politics and culture."

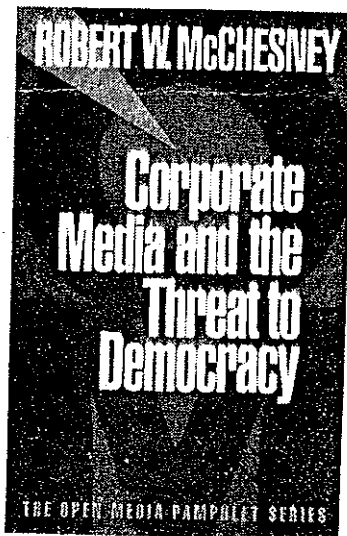
McChesney takes liberal and progressive foundations to task: "If they are serious about democracy, they are going to have to contribute to the establishment of the broad and rich media culture necessary for a democracy. They need to aggressively subsidize noncommercial and nonprofit media and journalism, as well as popular education campaigns concerning media ownership, control and policy making."

A decentralized, pro-democracy media could go a long way in helping people become active participants in shaping their civic life. In *Becoming Citizens in the Age of Television* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), David Thelen reminds us of how far we have strayed from the ideal of government for and by the people.

Thelen, a professor of history at Indiana University and the editor of the *Journal of American History*, offers an interesting comparative analysis of letters that citizens wrote to congressional representatives regarding key foreign-policy debates, from World War I to the Iran-contra congressional hearings.

Thelen discovered that between 1917 and 1987, the proportion of letter writers "using the smallest of all voices, that of the individual, more than doubled from 14.6 to 35.2 percent." At the same time, the number of letter writers who used a voice that "projected their political conclusions out of the cultures of community, occupation, ethnicity, partisanship, gender and religion in which 19th-century Americans had forged their political identities experienced a steady decline, falling from 73 percent in 1917 to 20 percent in 1987."

According to Thelen, this disintegration of traditional political constituencies fostered the emergence of the "opinion industries" that invented "the means for listening—market research, opinion polls, focus groups, civilian and military surveillance—and the means for speaking—advertising campaigns, public relations, spin doctors—that now distort politics." But this kind of listening and speaking denigrated individuals "as uniform components of audiences or markets, as submerged in masses whose voice existed only when it could be quantified by the techniques of opinion management."



For their part, Thelen argues, politicians got used to representing this "seemingly new kind of citizen, who moved in masses, suddenly and decisively." As a result, he continues, our leaders "lost the capacity to see and hear individual citizens even when their voices were on the other ends of phone lines or in the pages of letters being answered in senators' offices."

Things have grown worse. Opinion managers intercede more than ever in the political conversation between candidates for elected office and the people who elect them. During the 1992 campaign, for example, interpretation by TV journalists consumed 71 percent of campaign coverage time, leaving the candidates with only 12 percent. By 1992, candidates could expect, on average, 8.4 seconds of uninterrupted speech in a soundbite on the nightly news—down from 42.3 seconds in 1968.

Thelen offers several prescriptions for the ailing body politic. Campaign finance reform, he writes, would be a good place to start: "Since opinion management is an expensive habit that is fed by people with a special interest in controlling government, we can free elections from domination by the managerial values of adver-

tising and marketing by taking the profit out of managing opinion and limiting the supply of money."

More fundamentally, he offers this suggestion: "To remake politics we must do something at once simple and profound: We must speak. Rather than waiting to be polled and massed ... we must dismiss the figments and jargon of opinion management. We must think and act politically as we do with the people around us."

Ever the unrepentant populist, Thelen advises us to take to heart the words of turn-of-the-century muckraker Lincoln Steffens, who wrote in 1909:

Uninformed and misinformed; pauperized or over-worked; misled or betrayed by their leaders—financial, industrial, political and ecclesiastical, the people are suspicious, weary, and very, very busy, but they are, nonetheless, the first, last and best appeal in all great human cases. Certainly the first rule for the political reformer is: Go to the voters. And the reason seems to be, not that the people are better than their betters, but that they are more disinterested; they are not possessed by possessions; they have not so many "things" and "friends." They can afford, they are free to be fair. And, though each individual in the great crowd lacks some virtues, they all together have what no individual has, a combination of all the virtues. ◀

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Open Media Pamphlet #2  
Media Control:  
The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda  
Noam Chomsky

Beginning with a brief review of the origins of propaganda in America, Chomsky examines the varieties of mind control and behavior modification that result when government and businesses use image manipulation and disinformation to influence events. Chomsky discusses "public relations" and cites examples from the Gulf War to illustrate cases of history falsification and theories of *spectator democracy* inherent in domestic propaganda.

- The modern version of democracy is quite different from the original concept of participatory government. In the prevailing conception of democracy the public "must be barred from the managing of their own affairs and the means of information must be kept narrowly and rigidly controlled." The idea behind this is that most people are too stupid to know what's good for them.
- The use of propaganda, then, disseminated through the mass media, is a means of engineering opinion, giving the illusion of participatory government.
- The Gulf War provided many examples of the use of propaganda. Billed as a war against illegal occupation and human rights abuses, among many facts never disseminated to the public was the existence for years of an Iraqi democratic opposition, which operates in exile and gets no international support.

"The issue is not simply disinformation and the Gulf [War].... The issue is whether we want to live in a free society or whether we want to live under what amounts to a form of self-imposed totalitarianism, with the bewildered herd marginalized, directed elsewhere, terrified, screaming patriotic slogans, fearing for their lives and admiring with awe the leader who saved them from destruction, while the educated masses goose-step on command and repeat the slogans they're supposed to repeat and the society deteriorates at home." —from *Media Control*

Noam Chomsky, long-time political activist, writer and professor of linguistics at M.I.T., is the author of numerous books and articles on U.S. foreign policy, international affairs, linguistics and human rights. He writes regularly for *Z Magazine*.

64 pages 4 1/4 x 6 3/4

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## Upcoming Open Media Pamphlet Series titles:

Open Media Pamphlet #3  
On Biotechnology  
Kristin Dawkins

Kristin Dawkins discusses how the new technologies dominating agricultural research and production narrow the planet's gene pool and, through patents on plants and other living material, restrict people's access to essential farming inputs. This monocultural approach to food production and monopolistic control over the planet's resources is promoted by free trade, especially the GATT/WTO, and is changing rural communities all over the world. Within a few decades, the global system could crash—resulting in mass famine.

June 1997  
64 pages 4 1/4 x 6 3/4  
\$4.95 Trade Paperback ISBN: 1-888363-48-7

Open Media Pamphlet #4  
Globalizing Civil Society  
David C. Korten

David Korten, author of the acclaimed book *When Corporations Rule the World*, analyzes the present globalization crisis, and celebrates the emergence of a new awareness and sense of solidarity that is joining people from every part of the planet in the task of creating a new civilization grounded in peace and cooperation.

September 1997  
64 pages 4 1/4 x 6 3/4  
\$4.95 Trade Paperback ISBN: 1-888363-59-2

Open Media Pamphlet #5  
Zapatista Encuentro:  
Documents from the Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, La  
Realidad, Mexico  
by The Zapatistas

*Zapatists Encuentro* contains documents and communiqués from Subcomandante Marcos—the leader of the Zapatistas—from the 1996 Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. This remarkable event brought together 5,000 activists from all over the world to discuss how globalization (neoliberalism) affects us politically, culturally, economically, and socially.

September 1997  
64 pages 4 1/4 x 6 3/4  
\$4.95 Trade Paperback ISBN: 1-888363-58-4



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# Seven Stories Press

632 Broadway, Seventh Floor New York, NY 10012 . Phone: 212 995 0908 . Fax: 212 995 0720

April 16, 1997

Dear reviewer or book review editor:

It is with particular pride and pleasure that I write to call your attention to the launch of the Open Media Pamphlet Series at Seven Stories Press.

Publishers are *supposed to* disseminate the thinking of our best and brightest in response to historic events as they happen. Too often we're years late, or, in the case of newspapers and magazines, reactive and lacking in informed analysis.

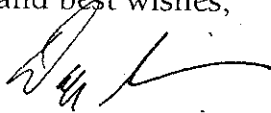
In its earlier incarnation as self-published, copy shop-manufactured, street corner-distributed tracts, the Open Media pamphlets were notable exceptions to this rule--dangerous words penned by top minds wrestling with sensitive issues. With no distribution to speak of, they made bestseller lists and stimulated informed debate.

The editors themselves, Greg Ruggiero and Stuart Sahulka, hark back to an almost-forgotten tradition of activist publishing--they are political pamphleteers in a direct line reaching back to Thomas Paine, Ben Franklin, and Mark Twain, among others.

The first titles in the new Open Media Pamphlet Series are works by Noam Chomsky, on propaganda, and Robert McChesney, on the corporatization of the media. Upcoming 1997 pamphlets are by Kristin Dawkins on biotechnology, the Zapatistas against neoliberalism, and David Korten on the globalization crisis. Greg and Stuart's principled, rigorous and engaged style as acquiring editors is as hot as ever and worthy of admiration.

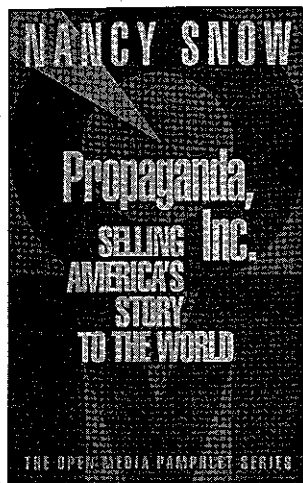
With the series now available in book form and through regular book distribution channels, we hope you'll help us get the word out. (You may also want to consider a sidebar interview with Stu and Greg, or one of their authors.)

With thanks and best wishes,



Dan Simon  
Publisher

Two new entries in the Open Media series lay out progressive policies that will take America into the next century



## Propaganda, Inc.

*Selling America's Story to the World*

Nancy Snow

Introduction by Herbert Schiller

- An insider's account of the U.S. Information Agency that ultimately calls for its abolition

**D**uring Nancy Snow's two years working as a cultural affairs specialist for the U.S. Information Agency, she was shocked to discover that the agency responsible for America's overseas information and culture programs is selling U.S. cultural policy to the highest bidder. In this account she exposes the agency as a propaganda machine that reduces the exchange of ideas and people to the vagaries of the American marketplace. Snow argues that the agency, which is without a domestic constituency, should be abandoned.

**Nancy Snow** is assistant professor of politics and international relations at New England College and a contributor to *Washington International* and *Toward Freedom* magazines. She lives in Henniker, NH.

May

\$4.95, Trade paper

ISBN 1-888363-74-6, 64pp, 4¼ x 6¾

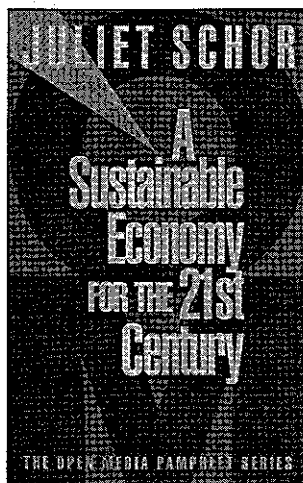
Current Affairs

### Seven Stories Press

ISBN 1-888363-74-6



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## A Sustainable Economy for the 21st Century

Juliet Schor

- "Juliet Schor's lucid and expert analysis is very much what is needed to convert the current harangue over economic policy to an informed debate."

— Noam Chomsky

**A**mericans today work more, earn less, and fret about the environment, healthcare, and poverty. Where did we go wrong? In this ground-breaking, previously hard-to-find pamphlet, Juliet Schor, author of the best-selling *The Overworked American*, shows how our society can shift its values. She lays out an ambitious but realistic economic plan to increase leisure time, raise the minimum wage, change corporate culture, create environmental standards, provide alternative housing and transportation, and promote social accountability.

**Juliet Schor** is a senior lecturer at Harvard University and Director of Women's Studies. She lives in Cambridge, MA.

May

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ISBN 1-888363-75-4, 64pp, 4¼ x 6¾

Current Affairs

### Seven Stories Press

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