

Notes from conference call re: Antitrust conference, 12/19/97, 2:00 p.m.

In attendance on conference call: 12-19-97

George Gerbner

Bob McChesney

Janine Jaquet

Mark Crispin Miller

Kate Duncan

The purpose of this conference call was to decide as much as we could what the best outcome of the antitrust conference would be, and how we could engineer the agenda to work toward that outcome. Both questions were easily taken care of.

The antitrust conference's purpose is to begin a dialogue on possibilities for legal recourse to media consolidation. This conference will consider the lay of the land regarding antitrust legislation as it relates to the media monopoly, and in light of that, what the next steps are to promote diversity of media ownership through legal means - whether they be enforcing current antitrust law, drafting new legislation, proposing new regulation, or something else. We may decide there are a multitude of courses to take, or we may decide that corporate ownership is too entrenched and there is no court that will listen. The most important part is to answer the question, "What do we do next?"

The antitrust conference is also a springboard of sorts for other meetings. This conference will define the issues, flesh out ideas, and may produce ongoing working groups in preparation for a second more focused conference at NYU in the fall, which will be more high-profile, ideally presented on C-SPAN. The antitrust conference also is a cousin to the digital conference, tentatively scheduled for April at American University in Washington DC.

Not only does the antitrust conference have legal recourse as a goal, but public attention and education as well, regarding the critical role the public should be playing in communication policy. We believe that if presented with the facts, most people would support legal recourse to the media monopoly.

With these ideas in mind, we came up with the following agenda:

Friday:

Two informational and inspirational presentations, one on antitrust and one on media consolidation, followed by in-depth discussion/question-answer sessions are all that is needed.

6:00 pm - Dinner (Served in Sugarloaf dining room)

7:00 pm - First presentation: An overview of traditional and extant antitrust law, from the Sherman Act to the present, as it pertains to mass communication policy. If Carl Person (recommended by Charles Mueller) can't do it, Mark will ask someone who is already attending.

7:20 pm - Second presentation: Current trends of mass media ownership. (Bob)

7:40 pm - Dialogue (with coffee and tea)

9:00 pm - Evaluation of Saturday's proposed agenda in light of the preceding discussion

9:15 - Retire to another room to socialize a bit.

Saturday:

Divided into two sections.

8:30 am - Breakfast. I presume they'll start serving breakfast when we tell them, so I'll say 8:15 am and people can wander down gradually.

9:15 am - Dialogue: Is there legal recourse to the media monopoly? Can we use antitrust?

10:15 am - Coffee break to evaluate if we're going about our business efficiently, or if we should break up into smaller groups (Mark).

10:40 am - continue conversation, possibly in a different format.

There should be another 10 minute break in here when appropriate.

12:10 pm - reconvene in large group, if necessary. Evaluate morning session and determine shape and subject of afternoon dialogue.

12:30 pm - Lunch. (Served in Sugarloaf dining room)

1:30 pm - Reconvene to discuss what practical legal steps we can take in light of the two previous sessions, as well as the question, what public information and action programs would be most effective?

Short breaks when appropriate

5:30 pm - Dinner, served in Sugarloaf dining room.

6:30 - Reconvene, exchange and evaluate results from afternoon dialogue. Continue discussion in the larger group. Evaluate Sunday's agenda according to Saturday's proceedings.

8:30 - Break for the evening. Maybe we can have a cocktail hour?

Sunday:

8:30 am - Breakfast.

9:15 am - Convene in large group. Discuss continuing action, including:

- Fall conference at NYU
- Digital conference
- Plan of action between this conference and the next; who's going to do what
- Potential media contacts and sources of funds with special interest in antitrust issues.

12:00 pm - Lunch, then everyone departs.