



The Media Monopoly

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Since this classic on corporate control of the media was first published in 1997, the number of corporations dominating our media has shrunk from fifty to merely five. Once called "alarmist," Bagdikian's claims are uncanny and chilling in their accuracy! This much-needed sixth edition follows up on the digital revolution, revealing startling details of a new communications cartel within the United States.

The Media Monopoly Details

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Author : Ben H. Bagdikian

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From Reader Review The Media Monopoly for online ebook

Mr. Mullins says

I read this awhile ago, but I continue to turn to it as a reminder that Ben's predictions were clear and not nearly alarming enough. I see there is a "New Media Monopoly" that I must look into now.

sologdin says

kinda classic, though always already falling into obsolescence as the consolidation identified in prior editions proceeds apace.

Amy says

This is one of my favorite books. You learn & discover so much about media and who runs what - it makes you doubt everything you read, hear & see. I highly recommend it!

Jeff says

Yeah, this is one of those books that they make you read when you take a beginner's communications theory class in college. But, like every other book they made me read, this one is fascinating. It's all about the ownership of media. Bagdikian said in the original edition of this book (1983) that within twenty years, less than seven corporations would own all mainstream media. He was right.

He was also an editor at the Washington Post to whom Daniel Ellsberg leaked portions of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. Although that wasn't the leak that was published in the New York Times and caused the uproar and the widened credibility gap between the federal government and the people concerning the Vietnam War.

Diane says

Essential reading for any communication's scholar or anyone interested in the shrinking number of firms who control our nation's media output. Bagdikian adeptly shows why it's happening and why we should care.

Craig says

One of the more complete analyses of the media monopoly and the possibility of such collusion. Chilling!

Brandon says

Eye opening.

Matteo says

This should be a part of every citizen's understanding of how our society works. Media ownership and concentration matters - we ignore it at our own risk.

Nathan says

One of the few college books I read that I really liked

Mamacher says

This would be supplemental reading to Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent. Not the best written tome, but full of interesting, in no nefarious, information.

Parapraxis says

Essential.

Kate says

A lot of interesting things to consider regarding corporations and the bottom line, and the ways in which "news" has been commodified.

I gave up reading this the first time but returned to it with energy and enthusiasm. Lots of reasons to back up that feeling in the pit of my stomach that there's really something wrong with the status quo and that our society has gotten off track somehow.

"The best estimate is that an adless paper costs the reader 70 percent more than a paper with the current level of ads. Though readers pay for the pages of advertising, the high volume of pages printed in a newspaper plant because of ad pages reduces the production cost per page. It is the enormous increase in ad pages that makes for a net increase in the cost of the whole paper. So eliminating these pages would mean smaller printing runs, which would be cheaper in total but higher per page by 70 percent. A paper with 1940-level ads, twelve and a half pages, would cost, at most 14 cents, instead of the 20 cents for the present [1983] level

of ads, forty three pages. Elimination of most of the larger ads in a newspaper would reduce the cost of many manufactured goods whose makers now add the cost of ads to the price. Today [1983], advertisers spend \$400 a year on each newspaper subscriber and about \$300 on each television household. Even more could be saved by the reduced prices of consumer goods while giving the readers a less expensive paper that would still have twelve pages of ads." p.147

"In 1977 Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal of New York produced secret IRS documents going back to 1950. They showed that the tax laws of Saudi Arabia were drafted with the help of Aramco to call the added price of oil not a 'royalty' but an 'income tax.' The Saudis did this knowing that the income tax paid to a foreign country is deductible from the income taxes an oil company pays to the U.S. on all income received in the U.S. by the parent firm.

"At the time, the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury called this 'royalty exacted in the guise of income tax' a 'sham.' But the power of the oil industry within government is almost unmatched, and the unorthodox provision was accepted by the Treasury. A 1977 calculation by the House Ways and Means Committee showed that about 75 percent of what the oil companies paid Saudi Arabia for oil was counted as 'income tax,' reducing their U.S. taxes so much that it costs other U.S. taxpayers more than \$2 billion a year. It is such a highly profitable avoidance of domestic taxes that it has motivated the major oil companies to emphasize Middle East oil despite its high price and unstable future." p.63-64

"Modern corruption is more subtle. At one time or another, advertisers have /successfully/ demanded that the following ideas appear in programs around their ads:

"All businessmen are good, or if not, are always condemned by other businessmen. All wars are humane. The status quo is wonderful. Also wonderful are grocery stores, bakeries, drug companies, restaurants, and laundries. Religionists, especially clergy, are perfect. All users of cigarettes are gentle, graceful, healthy, youthful people. In fact, anyone who uses a tobacco product is a hero. People who commit suicide never do it with pills. All financial institutions are always in good shape. The American way of life is beyond criticism.

"The above messages, to cite only a few, are not vague inferences. Major advertisers insisted, successfully, that these specific ideas be expressed not in ads but in the ostensibly 'independent' news reporting, editorial content, or entertainment programs of newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. The readers, listeners, and viewers do not know that these messages are planted by advertisers. They are not supposed to know. They are supposed to think that these ideas are the independent work of professional journalists and playwrights detached from anything commercial. If the audiences were told that the ideas represented explicit demands of corporations who advertised, the messages would lose their impact." p.154-155

"The news media--diluted of real meaning by apolitical and sterile context, homogenized with the growth of monopoly, overwhelmingly more of a service to merchants than to the audience, and filled with frivolous material--are a threat to their own future but also to the body politic.

"When sterility of news writing fails to relate political and social events to real forces in society, it produces something worse than 'nothingness.' By removing significant context from events, it leaves the average citizen looking at what James Britton has called a 'kaleidoscope.' If it is left as isolated fragments, Britton says, 'We can make nothing of the present moment.' And if people can make nothing of the present moment they tend to remain static and bewildered, left at the mercy of whoever acts with power. That, almost inevitably, means perpetuation of power without accountability. By following these policies of news, American media corporations benefit from the political sterility of the media. A population unable to select alternative patterns of power sustains the status quo." p.206

"There is no journalistic convention for dealing with the 'butcher's thumb' of owner prejudice in deciding which news events will be pursued, which will be repeated with emphasis.

"The pattern is clear in American journalism: in general, items are more likely to be pursued in depth if they portray flaws in the public, tax-supported sector of American life, and less likely to be pursued if they portray flaws in the corporate sector. Items about high costs or flaws in welfare and labor unions are likely to be emphasized and repeated. Items such as General Electric's conviction for cheating on its defense contract in 1985 are not as likely to be pursued by a series of articles in depth on flaws in defense contracting. Over long periods of time, this results in the public impression that public-sector activities are essentially flawed and should be limited while private enterprises are essentially sound and have no need for change." p.216

"Consolidated control over the mass media has congealed at a tenuous time in national history. Democracy's strength is in its ability to adapt nonviolently to changing needs, and in the last quarter of a century the United States has developed a special need for openness to new ideas and diversity of information. It must deal with the threat of nuclear annihilation, with growing global tensions between rich nations and poor ones, while within its own borders there is a parallel polarization between haves and have-nots, whites and nonwhites, old and young.

"In periods of prolonged and basic change, societies that survive with any coherence need a social glue that holds them together. Today there is a weakening of national patterns that once constituted an automatic glue. In times past, within small communities, people of different classes may not have approved of each other but at least were forced to recognize each other. In public schools the children of the poor and the children of the rich came to know each other before the social status of their parents pulled them apart.

"But in the last quarter of the twentieth century, Americans no longer know each other as they once did. In large cities the inhabitants have become strangers. They no longer attend the same schools or ride the same public transportation. The automobile has become a social as well as a mechanical isolation chamber in which the rich and poor pass each other in unseeing isolation." p.224

Brett says

This one I read while I was in Journalism school...unfortunately I was a senior when I stumbled across it. It was rather disconcerting to find out my chosen profession was a bullshit PR function of the corporate world when I was nearing the end of my degree. I've never read a newspaper since and 100% believed what they told me.
