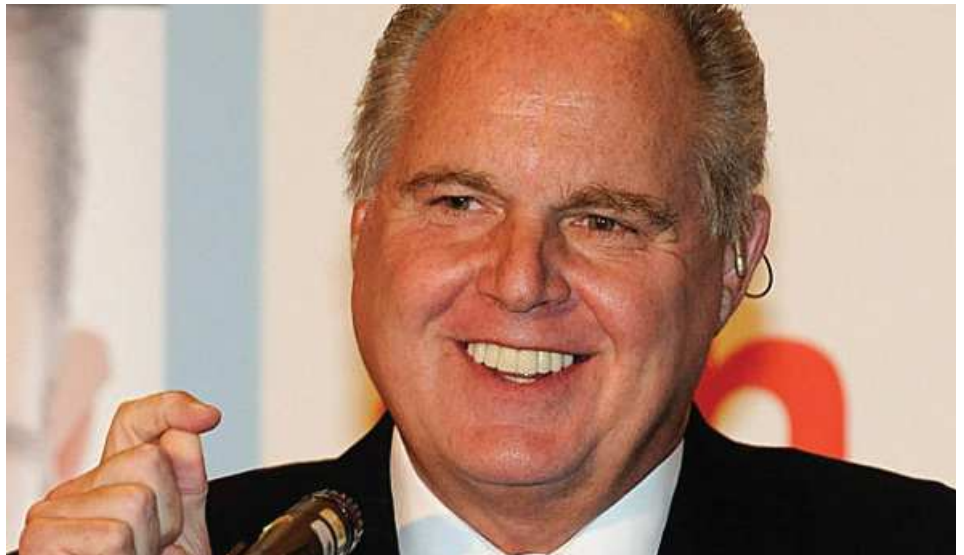


Hush Rush

Once again the intolerant Left works to censor independent voices in the media

By Barbara Joanna Lucas

Summary: *The Left does not tolerate diversity of opinion. Taking cues from the George Soros-funded slander shop Media Matters for America, its thuggish activists have been successfully waging a war against talk radio, one of the few sectors of the media that is not dominated by liberals and progressives. They use the Internet to scold and intimidate advertisers while portraying mainstream conservatives as dangerous extremists. The strategy hasn't had much impact on the size of talk radio's audience, but it has scared away many companies that advertise on talk radio shows. The highest-rated radio talker, Rush Limbaugh, can weather the storm, but shows lower on the industry's totem pole are struggling.*



Top-rated radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh, a champion of conservatism who has long enraged the Left.

If you ever ask yourselves why the Left has such a preference for coercion and distaste for personal choice, talk radio might provide a partial explanation.

For the Left, the marketplace of ideas is something they haven't been very good at for quite some time. After talk radio broke the liberal media monopoly starting with Rush Limbaugh in 1988, the Left has been in a panic.

Many Democrats wanted to restore the Fairness Doctrine, an archaic Federal Communications Commission regulation that mandates "equal time" for any controversial issue discussed on the air. In practice, that led TV and radio stations to muzzle discussion of public affairs. But there was no public support for that. Liberals even attempted to compete in the free market in the early 2000s with Air America—a big flop. But markets, which involve choice instead of compulsory behavior, have never been the Left's thing anyway.

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So now the Left is going back to a tried and true method for them: bullying. And they seem to be having some success at it.

You could call it a “vast left-wing conspiracy,” given that we are talking about a multi-faceted network of progressive organizations collaborating to target one individual, or at least one industry. What might keep it from being called a conspiracy is the fact that there is nothing secretive about it. Many of the participants are publicly giving each other rhetorical high fives.

The George Soros-funded Media Matters for America, the tin-foil hat wearing Daily Kos blog, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) have all piled on in the effort to threaten boycotts against any company that advertises on the Rush Limbaugh Show from noon to 3 p.m. Eastern on Monday through Friday.

Limbaugh is a public figure who makes a good living off providing his opinion and analysis on politics, views millions of

Americans agree with. In that sense, anyone who puts themselves in the public eye generally has to take the good with the bad, and Limbaugh can more than hold his own against attacks. But Limbaugh is not even the primary victim of the bullying campaign aimed at him. It's small businesses that advertise on his show, smeared online, and intimidated by a vicious, dishonest social media campaign.

This campaign is being run by groups and individuals who could easily be described as crackpots for what they have said in the past. Nevertheless, they are claiming the moral authority to demand boycotts over opinions they disagree with. What's worse is that it seems they may be starting to win.

Impact on Talk Radio

If the vast network of left-wing pressure groups is not yet winning, its members are at least pushing that view in the mainstream media, which is reporting that talk radio is getting hit hard. The *Wall Street Journal* reported Feb. 3:

Talk and news stations combined generated \$1.5 billion in revenue in 2013, down from \$1.6 billion in 2011, according to the latest numbers from media research firm BIA/Kelsey. Pure talk-station revenue fell to \$205 million, from \$217 million. The number of talk stations shrank to 510 from 546 over that time period, while the number of news stations increased by 150 to total 1,524.

The *Journal* added that the percentage of radio listeners tuning into talk radio dropped from 11 percent in 2012 to 9 percent in late 2013, a decline but not a plummet by any means. Ads are selling for about half the price of what it would cost to advertise on a music station. The *Journal* also noted:

There are plenty of people listening to talk radio. But over the past three years, it has become increasingly difficult to make money off it.

So it's not the listening public, it's the unscrupulous boycott campaigns.

A *Time* article observed, “The Internet has already substantially changed the history of talk radio.” It continued:

Today, by contrast, every word that Limbaugh says is broadcast and archived. Watchdog groups, such as Media Matters, scrutinize every word, waiting to blast any potentially offensive statements out to the world. Whereas the opinions of non-listeners might have been irrelevant in 1988 and a boycott hard to organize, someone who considered the Elba comments to be racist could easily use social media to pressure advertisers to remove their ads from Limbaugh's program (as many did in 2012 after Limbaugh insulted Georgetown student Sandra Fluke).

(Editor's note: On Dec. 23, 2014, Rush Limbaugh said on his show that British actor Idris Elba, a black man, would not be a good choice to play James Bond in the 007 spy movie franchise, because “James Bond was white and Scottish, period.”)

The point of the anti-Limbaugh movement is to cripple talk radio, but using the Saul Alinsky model: pick a target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it; attack people not institutions. Limbaugh is a symbol. But going after him they hope to harm the entire talk radio industry. Success doesn't mean that the Left would have its media monopoly entirely back, but it would mean the Left could enjoy significant revenge against the guy who dared to break its monopoly.

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Organization Trends

is published by Capital Research Center, a non-partisan education and research organization, classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity.

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Organization Trends welcomes letters to the editor.

Reprints are available for \$2.50 prepaid to Capital Research Center.

The Vast Network

The Stop Rush campaign is by far the largest and most effective at intimidating sponsors of Limbaugh's show.

Two other social media movements actually seem to be legitimate grassroots, without as much reach. There is FlushRush, which has about 3,400 likes on Facebook, and a frequently used Twitter hashtag. There is also Boycott Rush, which actually began in 2003, created by those opposed to how Limbaugh characterized people opposed to going to war with Iraq; it has 97,000 likes on Facebook.

But Stop Rush has received all the attention. It was started by Angelo Carusone, executive vice president of Media Matters, who previously started Stop Beck in 2009, which was a campaign to persuade advertisers to boycott Glenn Beck for his radio and TV programs.

Carusone started the "Stop Rush" Twitter account in January 2010, after the earthquake in Haiti (*New York Times*, March 2, 2012). That's when Limbaugh said Obama had a politically calculated motive in his response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti, saying:

I think in the Haiti earthquake, ladies and gentlemen—in the words of Rahm Emanuel—we have another crisis simply too good to waste. This will play right into Obama's hands. He's humanitarian, compassionate. They'll use this to burnish their, shall we say, "credibility" with the black community—in the both light-skinned and dark-skinned black community in this country. It's made-to-order for them. That's why he couldn't

wait to get out there, could not wait to get out there.

Then the anti-Rush movement lay mostly dormant until two years later when the infamous activist Sandra Fluke came along and demanded free contraception when speaking to a group of House Democrats.

Limbaugh said, "What does it say about the college coed Susan Fluke [*sic*] who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex? What does that make her? It makes her a slut, right?"

Not only was the insult the best thing that happened to Fluke in terms of making her famous and guaranteeing her a speaking role at the Democratic National Convention, it also it revved up the Stop Rush Campaign, which has 11,800 Twitter followers.

Carusone's role made Media Matters a leading partner in the effort, and the group claims success since going on the attack over the Sandra Fluke comments.

Since then, thousands of businesses have reportedly taken steps to ensure that their ads do not run during Limbaugh's program. The result? Hundreds of millions of dollars in losses attributable to advertisers refusing to subsidize The Rush Limbaugh Show," the Media Matters website says. "It's up to this grassroots movement—individuals, organizations, and hundreds of independent organizers, like the FlushRush and #StopRush communities—to keep up the pressure. Together, their efforts and your participation are having a tremendous impact.

Other organizations in the mix are the ultra-left Daily Kos, which published a post in February that boasted, "social media activism is kicking the ass of Rush Limbaugh and hate radio, I'd say the boycotting consumers, as well as the activists, are doing something very right."

The Daily Kos listed several other organizations lending their assistance, including better known establishment liberal groups such as the National Organization for Women and the Center for American Progress's blog, Think Progress.

The Kos piece further listed the liberal online publication AlterNet, which proclaimed in a piece about the anti-Limbaugh social media movement: "No more do we have to write, stamp, and mail letters to companies with our grievances, then wonder if anyone will read them. No longer do we have to wait on the phone for hours to talk with someone who might care. Now we can simply post our thoughts/complaints to companies with a few words and clicks on Facebook and Twitter. Most likely someone in the company will see it, and it behooves them to address the consumers. One bad customer experience can go viral. This may seem intimidating, but in reality it's simply the beauty of America's free market, except this time, free market is to the advantage of the consumers. This allows citizens [to] opt to boycott/not buy from companies that support hate media."

The last part of the statement is particularly wrong on two fronts, and betrays the Left's fundamental misunderstanding of the free market. First, it's not a free market, but a disingenuous and small group trying to push

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its view on the public. Secondly, a truly free market almost always works to the advantage of consumers.

Other organizations listed as major participants in the movement are the blogs: Being Liberal, Crooks and Liars, Addiction to Info, Political Loudmouth, Liberals United blog, and the advocacy groups UnitedWomen.org and Left Action.

Cast of Shady Characters

Carusone came on board Media Matters in late 2010 after starting the Stop Beck and Stop Rush movements on social media. He was charged with leaning on businesses that advertise on talk radio shows and overseeing the “Drop Fox Campaign,” which asks advertisers to pull their ads from the largest cable news channel in the country (Huffington Post, Dec. 9, 2010).

After the Fluke matter, he used his Twitter account to target not only Limbaugh but any company that advertised on the program. He tried to frame it positively.

“I thought that in dealing with advertisers, some really appreciated being educated about where their ads were running. The ad market took care of this,” he told the *Village Voice* in an interview published March 7, 2012. “The word ‘boycott,’ it’s very rare that I called for a boycott or attacked a company. For the most part, I let advertisers know where there money was being spent, where it was going, and what it was helping. They made the decision themselves.”

He called the Fluke matter, “different and distinguishable” from other Rush controversies.

“There have been temporary flare ups with Rush before. This was clearly not one of those. It has a different dynamic, and became a business problem, as opposed to people just being angry,” he continued. “Rush had spent three full days digging in. I started talking to advertisers on Thursday, and got a lot of feedback on Friday, and I knew a lot of movement was taking place. This was important to think about from a business perspective. The very clearest example was when Carbonite came out on Saturday night. That was significant because they had been one of his biggest advertisers, and they announced their drop after the so called apology. They said the apology didn’t matter. Rush had exposed himself as too volatile to do business with.”

But what Limbaugh said on the air does not compare to the vitriol Carusone has used on his own blog in the past, mostly anti-gay and anti-Semitic rhetoric – even though he said in the blogs that his boyfriend was Jewish. The blog routinely used “trannies” to describe transvestites, “homos” to describe homosexuals, and “jewry” to describe Jewish men. (*Washington Times*, Oct. 7, 2014)

One October 2005 post said, “Thanks to my adorable boyfriend (come on, despite his jewry, you KNOW he’s adorable), my interest in Comedy Central’s hit TV show South Park has begun to pick up (again).” Interestingly a November 2005 post affirmed that, at least at the time, he was a Republican. “I’m still a registered Republican and for the time being I’m not prepared to change my party affiliation.” He went on to express admiration for former President Ronald Reagan, then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Sen. John McCain, while calling Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia “brilliant,” and praising then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as “sassy.”

An investigation by the Rush Limbaugh Show found that only 10 people produce 70 percent of the tweets that are targeting businesses across the country. In many cases people from states who will never be customers at a business are threatening to boycott it and going on to other websites to give it poor reviews.

“The Stop Rush group claims to be made up of ordinary consumers unhappy with Rush Limbaugh’s comments,” a Rush Limbaugh Show press release stated. “The group claims to be ‘grassroots,’ just concerned consumers who won’t shop at businesses that advertise with Rush Limbaugh. In truth, however, there are no potential customers here, just a small number of hardcore political activists founded by Angelo Carusone, EVP of Media Matters for America.”

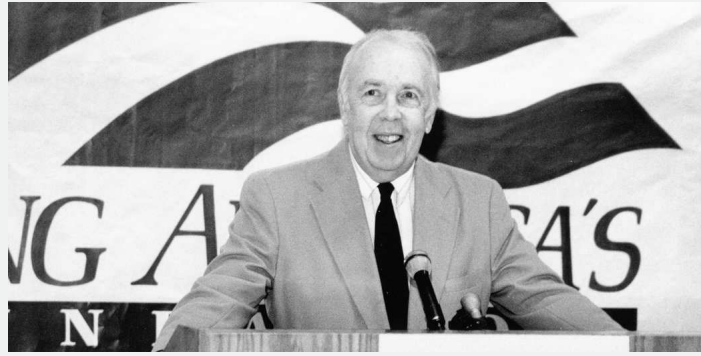
CNSNews.com tracked down some of the 10 top tweeters controlling the entire movement, most of whom were quite brazen and boastful.

“Many of our volunteers listen to Limbaugh’s show in order to identify his advertisers in various markets,” Matt Osborne told CNSNews.com. Osborne is the editor of the hateful anti-conservative blog Breitbart Unmasked.

“Other volunteers contact advertisers – mostly by phone, but also on Twitter and Facebook,” Osborne proclaimed. “We share Limbaugh’s words with them verbatim and then ask them to divest from his program.”

He said he has been a Stop Rush volunteer since 2012, claimed that there has never been a Media Matters person on the group’s Facebook page, and said most organizing takes place on Facebook rather than Twitter.

(continued on page 6)



Medford Stanton Evans, R.I.P.

M. Stanton Evans died last month at the age of 80, and the Capital Research Center mourns the loss. He was tied to CRC – and countless other conservative groups – in many ways. For example, our president, Terry Scanlon, has long served on the board of Stan’s nonprofit, the Education and Research Institute, and two of our staff, vice president Scott Walter and senior fellow Martin Morse Wooster, are graduates of the National Journalism Center that Stan founded in 1977.

Stan is a shining example of what one smart, dedicated man can accomplish in America’s rich civil society. He was a nonprofit entrepreneur many times over. Most famously, he wrote the Sharon Statement that was crafted at William F. Buckley’s estate in 1960, which launched the group Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). But Stan was also a leader at the American Conservative Union (ACU), serving as chairman of its board from 1971 to 1977. During that time he helped to invent the ACU’s annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), now in its fifth decade and one of the largest conservative gatherings in the country, and he also helped launch some 35 state conservative unions.

Stan’s principles kept him from being a mere partisan, as Republican President Richard Nixon discovered when Stan became one of his first critics from the right in 1970, and as Nixon’s successor, Gerald Ford, discovered when Stan and the state conservative unions supported the upstart Ronald Reagan against the Republican incumbent in 1976.

Stan’s philosophy began to develop when he was an undergraduate at Yale, which graduated him magna cum laude in 1955. He was already reading conservative and libertarian thinkers like Frank Chodorov, and he went on to do graduate work in economics at New York University under Ludwig von Mises. Throughout his career, Stan’s philosophy was “fusionist,” that is to say, he believed the traditionalist and libertarian strands of conservatism were naturally connected. As he put it,

“The idea that there is some sort of huge conflict between religious values and liberty is a misstatement of the whole problem. The two are inseparable ... if there are no moral axioms, why should there be any freedom?”

Stan left the most thorough account of his philosophy in his classic book *The Theme Is Freedom: Religion, Politics, and the American Tradition* (Regnery, 1996). To the end of his life, he continued writing, and his most recent work was *Stalin’s Secret Agents: The Subversion of Roosevelt’s Government* (Threshold, 2012).

He was perhaps best known, however, for his endless string of witticisms, delivered in perfect deadpan. Let us conclude this tribute to his legacy with a few of his best:

“Liberals don’t care what you do, as long as it’s compulsory.”

“Tobacco is my favorite leafy vegetable.”

“I never liked Nixon until Watergate.”

“The trouble with conservatives is that too many of them come to Washington thinking they are going to drain the swamp, only to discover that Washington is a hot tub.”

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Osborne previously wrote a 2,000-word essay about his fantasy of kidnapping and torturing conservative talk show hosts (Breitbart News, Oct. 7, 2014). The Osborne essay reads: “(He) objected to our masked, armed entry, but was immediately subdued with the help of a taser. We gagged, hooded, and handcuffed the fat bastard before levering him into a wheelbarrow with scrap two-by-fours.... Underway, the three of us in back took turns kicking (him) in his stomach with our combat-booted feet (Top using only his solid prosthetic foot)....”

Another of the top tweeters is Nancy Padak, a tenured professor at Kent State University, who according to the Limbaugh release, “emails advertisers with harassment from her official Kent State email address. Gives businesses she has no relationship with 1 star ratings if they advertise on Rush.”

In a 2012 Facebook post to Wright Brand Bacon, part of Tyson Foods, Linda Kotsenburg Swanholt said, “Hi! Very sad to hear your ad on the Rush Limbaugh Show Friday. It appears your ad was rotated into his show due to others requesting their ads NOT be aired near or during his show” (CNSNews.com, Sept. 25, 2014). Another person named by the Limbaugh press release was Lauren Reynolds, with “Fun Fact: Gives businesses she has no relationship with 1 star ratings if they advertise on Rush.” She told CNSNews.com, “I contact ALL businesses and organizations if I hear their ad aired during the Rush Limbaugh Show,” but she claimed the Limbaugh release had “misinformation.”

So how did such a tiny group of folks have such a far-reaching impact? The Limbaugh team found that they sort of cheated.

“How does this small group make themselves look so much bigger than they actually are? Stop Rush has deployed custom automated tweeting software, in violation of Twitter’s rules, that lets their activists send tweets at a rate far faster than any unassisted person could do manually,” the Limbaugh press release said. “They send barrages of thousands of messages through this software until advertisers are bullied and harassed into cancellation.”

For his part, Carusone gave a non-denial denial regarding automated tweeting. “Rush Limbaugh’s show has reportedly lost millions of dollars in revenue for radio companies, thousands of advertisers big and small refuse to run ads on the program and radio stations are dropping the show,” Carusone said. “After initially insisting there were no troubles with advertisers, two years later Limbaugh’s crisis team comes out with a report attributing this massive exodus to just 10 people? The numbers just don’t add up. This is a grassroots effort that grows every day. Instead of attacking people on the internet, Limbaugh’s team would better fill their role by advising their client not to excuse rape in some situations (as he did just last week). Rush Limbaugh is bad for business—and the only thing Limbaugh has to blame for that is his own repeated conduct” (The Blaze, Sept. 23, 2014).

But what Carusone does is not activism, said Limbaugh spokesman Brian Glicklich.

“A small number of politically motivated out-of-state activists are distributing target lists indiscriminately, and annoying small businesses until they give up the advertising deals that help them grow, or risk being unable to conduct business at all. It’s not even activism...it’s blackmail,” Glicklich said.

Though only a spokesman, even Glicklich has been attacked, in this case by a leading activist in the movement, Carol Kernahan Wallin, a writer for DailyKos. Wallin posted photos of Glicklich’s immediate family members on Twitter. Considering the late night calls Glicklich had gotten at his home, he asked Twitter to take down the photo of his family, which Twitter did. Oddly enough, Wallin sued Glicklich for cyber harassment to stop Glicklich from using her name or identifying information in public about her participating in the Stop Rush campaign (Daily Caller, March 4, 2015).

“The biggest objection that the leaders of Stop Rush have is their being identified by name and being associated with the odious comments they make,” Glicklich told the Daily Caller. “Shame is a powerful motivator and they should be ashamed of themselves, and they will be associated with their words. The fact that they become so violent and intimidating every time they are identified by name is proof of how ashamed they are of their actions.”

Another person involved in the Stop Rush movement is MSNBC’s Krystal Ball, according to the Daily Caller.

Corporate Caving

Despite this collection of bizarre personalities, advertisers seem to be running for cover, even though they are missing out on presenting their product to millions.

As Breitbart editor Ben Shapiro correctly wrote, “Why advertisers would take seriously the complaints of those whose own writings are exponentially worse than anything Rush Limbaugh has ever said is beyond reason. But then again, so is Stop Rush.”

But many big companies have caved on Limbaugh's show, as well as other programs that might have controversial content.

Lowes and JC Penny told their media buyers not to air their ads on news-talk stations, period. Clorox and Dominos Pizza prohibit their media buyers from airing ads within 30 minutes of numerous talk radio programs, including conservative, liberal, and religious talk programming, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. The *New York Times* reported that Quicken Loan suspended advertising on Limbaugh's show, while two mattress companies Sleep Train and Sleep Number both laid down for the Stop Rush movement.

When Democrats Attack

A cabal of nonprofits and far-left activists trying to muzzle ideas that aren't their own is nothing new. It's what they do. It becomes a more dangerous matter when actual government officials become involved, directly or indirectly.

That's what happened when the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the campaign organization for House Democrats, began using the same tactics as the activists to scare businesses and raise money at the same time. Chaired by U.S. Rep. Steve Israel of New York, the DCCC appeal sent to donors included an email from Sandra Fluke, gleefully wallowing in victimhood, saying, "As a previous target of Limbaugh's sexist attacks, take it from me: we need to stand together and call Rush out. The DCCC has a petition to tell advertisers to stop funding this repulsive commentary. Sign your name and demand that companies pull their advertising from Rush's program." The DCCC surpassed its goal of 300,000 names on the petition. The appeal quoted Limbaugh saying, "How many

of you guys, in your own experience with women, have learned that 'no' means 'yes' if you know how to spot it?"

Limbaugh's attorney Patty Glaser said the DCCC "has intentionally disseminated demonstrably false statements concerning Rush Limbaugh in a concerted effort to harm Mr. Limbaugh, and with reckless disregard for the resulting impact to small businesses across America that choose to advertise on his radio program."

Glaser later added, "The DCCC may believe it to be immune from liability by quoting words, taken out of context. This is untrue." Limbaugh's attorney references the case of *Price v. Stossel*, where the courts decided that it "constitutes defamation" if a public figure's remarks are presented out of context in a way that changes the public's understanding of the comment. Veteran White House reporter Keith Koffler put it in perspective by making it clear Limbaugh is not the issue. "What I care about is that the DCCC, your government, is trying to put Rush out of business because of something he said," Koffler wrote. "The subversion of our country and its principles to the agenda of the Democratic Party and its demands for political correctness is far more of a danger than anything Rush Limbaugh can come up with."

While the DCCC's action could seem a bigger threat, the broader boycott/bully movement is also a significant problem. The issue really isn't Limbaugh or even talk radio. The issue is Americans' freedom of speech and their ability to compete in the commercial marketplace and in the marketplace of ideas.

Liberal groups, backed by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s, began using the Fairness Doctrine to intimidate

opposition voices on the air, and eventually stations just decided it wasn't worth the headache. In this way the Left chilled political speech. After the Fairness Doctrine fell in the late 1980s, a rebirth of political speech occurred.

The boycotts are functioning as a *de facto* Fairness Doctrine. The only grim consolation is that these boycotts are harming liberal voices as well, as a growing number of companies choose not to advertise with anyone who may elicit a little controversy.

Barbara Joanna Lucas is a freelance writer in Virginia and a frequent contributor to Capital Research Center publications. She blogs at The Sharp Bite (TheSharpBite.blogspot.com).

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Terrence Scanlon, President

Briefly Noted

Hypocrisy alert: Although **Media Matters for America** head **David Brock** has taken the lead as **Hillary Clinton's** foremost defender in the deleted-email scandal, arguing she did nothing illegal, another group he helps to run once attacked another Democrat for his use of private email accounts. The **George Soros**-funded **Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington** (CREW) last year raked New York Gov. **Andrew Cuomo**, who may be Clinton's rival for the Democrats' presidential nomination, over the coals for using private email. "Government officials who use private email or untraceable text messages to keep their dealings secret from the public that elects them and funds their salaries and whom they claim to represent must be held accountable for their conduct," said CREW's then-director **Melanie Sloan**. "If Governor Cuomo doesn't want voters to know what he's doing, maybe he is doing something he shouldn't."

A Boston-based hub of terrorism associated with a top Islamic State propagandist and producer of hostage-beheading videos was welcomed to a recent anti-terrorism conference at the Obama White House. The terrorist-friendly **Islamic Society of Boston** (ISB), which is a known front for Islamist terrorist groups, operates mosques in and around Boston. Social media guru **Ahmad Abousamra**, who is now the chief propagandist for the Islamic State, regularly attended ISB's Cambridge mosque. **Americans For Peace and Tolerance** warned that ISB "and its political arm, the Muslim American Society, [which are] seen as the go-to groups for civic and law enforcement partnerships, have links to many extremists who are either in jail, in flight from federal authorities, or have been killed during terrorist attacks."

The radical left-wing **National Day Laborer Organizing Network** (NDLON) has criticized federal Judge **Andrew S. Hanen** as racist and xenophobic, because he temporarily enjoined the Obama administration from carrying out its planned executive action regularizing the status of illegal aliens. **Pablo Alvarado**, NDLON's executive director, called the decision "judicial vigilantism." By contrast, Sen. **Ted Cruz** (R-Texas) said the court ruling was a "major victory for the rule of law" and "a major turning point in the fight to stop Obama's lawless amnesty."

For years, **American Enterprise Institute** scholar **Peter J. Wallison** was a prophet without honor as he warned that the stage was being set for financial disaster, thanks to bad government housing policy that was largely driven by radical pressure groups like **ACORN**. Then the housing bubble burst, proving Wallison right, yet the Left quickly pivoted to claim that the problem stemmed from insufficient government regulation, and Americans were saddled with the **Dodd-Frank Act** and similar regulatory messes. Now Wallison has written the definitive study of the housing collapse for Encounter Books, but the subtitle makes another disturbing prediction: *Hidden in Plain Sight: What Really Caused the World's Worst Financial Crisis and Why It Could Happen Again*.

The Rev. **Al Sharpton's** financial records from his New York mayoral run in 1997 and for the presidency in 2003 were destroyed in suspicious fires, National Review Online discovered. Sharpton, who heads **National Action Network**, used the convenient combustions as excuses for not complying with tax and campaign disclosure laws. From the beginning, investigators deemed the 1997 fire that started in the beauty salon below his campaign headquarters "'suspicious' because of 'a heavy volume of fire on arrival' and because many of the doors remained unlocked after hours, according to the New York Fire Department's fire-and-incident report." A Sharpton aide claimed just about everything in the headquarters went up in flames, "but a source knowledgeable about the investigation tells National Review Online that Sharpton's office was mostly empty, and that the damage was not extensive."

Meanwhile, a suspected mobster from the **Genovese** crime family who had been Sharpton's friend has pleaded guilty to federal racketeering charges related to extortion and gambling. **Daniel Pagano** was facing two decades in prison but plea-bargained and is now expected to receive a sentence of between 27 and 33 months. Sharpton has been named as an FBI informant who was active when Pagano's father, also a reputed gangster, was under investigation. Sharpton denies it.