

Inside the Disinformation Machine: A Look at the Left's New Media Operation

By Matthew Sheffield and Noel Sheppard

Summary: If you think the media has a liberal bias today, wait until you see what the left has in store for America's future. Extremist billionaires, "netroots" activists, and nonprofit pressure groups are creating a new media network. Through blog journalism, they aim to discredit the media outposts of the right while remaking the Internet in their own image.

There is no argument that over the last 30 years American journalism has become increasingly powerful and pervasive. There is no escaping the modern media: It functions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is constantly updating online. The daily newspaper and the "nightly news" on TV are outmoded concepts that are losing readers and viewers—and profits.

There is also no argument that American journalists are liberals. Thirty years' worth of polling data and opinion surveys clearly demonstrate this fact. Journalists say they are liberals, they vote for liberal political candidates, voice what are considered liberal opinions and reject what are considered conservative positions on political and social issues. The liberal leanings of journalists are well documented. (For more on media bias, see <http://www.mrc.org/biasbasics/pdf/BiasBasics.pdf>.)

Despite the fact that liberals dominate the highest-profile journalistic institutions in America, this isn't enough to many on the far left. Through a complex network of wealthy foundations, think tanks and web sites, the far left is creating a new media infrastructure with the ultimate goal of banishing conser-



How the radical left covers the Democratic Party convention in Denver: Reporter Jeremy Scahill interviews former U.S. Army officer Ann Wright on August 24 at a pre-convention anti-war rally. Scahill also interviewed activists Ward Churchill, Cindy Sheehan, and Leslie Cagan for the left-wing TV and radio program, "Democracy Now!" (photo from video grab)

vative and libertarian thought to the nether regions of media and curbing the political power of the right.

The Left's Money Men Push a New Communications Strategy

In the modern age, the American left has primarily received its funding from a combination of labor unions and a small group of extremely wealthy individuals bent on imposing their political beliefs on the rest of the populace, often to benefit their own business interests. In contrast, the American

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right has generally drawn its sustenance from the middle class with some help from high-worth individuals.

The net effect of such funding divisions has been that candidates farther to the left tend to do better at the legislative level of federal power, especially in the House of Representatives. The right, meanwhile, has held a seeming lock on presidential power due to its solid middle-class base. No Democrat since Lyndon Johnson has received a majority of the popular vote.

The left's inability to articulate a national message has frustrated its theorists and donors for many years but especially following the 2000 and 2004 presidential election losses. Despite massively increasing the size of its financial pool, the left was not able to secure the White House for candidates Al Gore and John Kerry. After Kerry conceded in 2004, liberal frustration led to the creation of a fake map that mocked right-of-center America, deriding those parts of the nation that voted for President George W. Bush as "Jesusland." A graphic showing a map of the U.S. divided between "Jesusland" and the "United States of Canada," was widely circulated online. (See graphic on page 3.)

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The financiers of the left were forced to reexamine their assumptions. Big donors such as George Soros, his friend Progressive Insurance chairman Peter B. Lewis, the savings and loan tycoons Herbert and Marion Sandler and other prominent figures, especially in Silicon Valley and Hollywood, faced up to their electoral defeats and reached a startling conclusion: Funding partisan politics may not be the best way to enact a political agenda.

The money men realized that while elections are important, they are only steps in a much longer process. Something more fundamental would have to occur before liberal candidates like Gore and Kerry could convince the public that their ideas were best for America. Americans would first have to grow accustomed to left-wing political messages—and that would require a more radical transformation of the media, one requiring massive capital investments in institutions that would create a media environment hospitable to far left ideas.

Ironically, the left-wing billionaires took their inspiration from the conservative movement. One of the pivotal figures in this epiphany was a former Clinton administration official named Rob Stein. In mid-2004 Stein began presenting a dramatic slideshow to select audiences of wealthy liberals. It not only outlined why the left was failing but, amazingly, it explained that the left could learn from the conservative movement. As chronicled by journalist Matt Bai in his book *The Argument*, Stein described what conservatives had accomplished and why liberals needed to imitate them:

"Conservatives hadn't simply learned to win elections. They had also, over the last thirty years, changed the terms of American political debate. If you imagined the nation's politics as a gauge moving from far left to far right, then the default position of the needle, the place where most Americans lived, was no longer in the middle. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, it had tilted to the right and this was not an accident. It was the result of a deliberate, stealthy campaign waged and funded by a relatively small number of wealthy white men whose only real political allegiance was to a radically conservative ideology. What

Democrats needed, Rob was arguing, was not a better party apparatus or stronger candidates, but their own version of a message machine. They needed to build independent groups that could create and promote a progressive agenda—not for the purpose of winning the next election or the one after that, but to restore, over time, some ideological balance to the marketplace of political ideas.

None of what Rob was saying about the conservative movement was terribly new, but never had it been so carefully quantified, so tightly packaged, so nicely visualized. Moreover, Rob's argument represented a fairly radical departure from the static way in which Democratic politics had always worked. Because Democrats had been the majority party for so much of the twentieth century, their leading politicians had always run the party, and the donors existed simply to serve the interests of those politicians. Elected leaders and their consultants directed wealthy patrons to give to a series of campaigns or party committees, or to hold fund-raisers at their lavish homes for the same purpose; if the contributors didn't give money to the party or its candidates, then they weren't considered important players in the Democratic universe. What Rob was suggesting, now that Democrats had been consigned to the minority, was that the whole system should essentially work in reverse—that it was up to the donors to build their own ideological movement (indeed, that they were the only ones who could), and that the party's politicians should take direction from them, rather than the other way around." (*The Argument*, 26-27)

In practical terms, this project could mean only one thing: Donors would need to take the initiative. They would have to increase their giving to left-wing ideologues, activists, and policy wonks who understood the importance of creating and marketing political messages. Prompted by Soros and informed by Stein, the left's base of big donors created the Democracy Alliance, a kind of political venture capital fund that now invests heavily in political advocacy nonprofits. (See "Billionaires for Big Government: What's Next for George Soros's Democracy Alliance," by Matthew Vadum and James Dellinger, *Foundation Watch*, January 2008.)

There are many advantages to this type of arrangement. Perhaps the most important is that political activists never have to stand for election. Unlike vote-seeking candidates, activists have no reason to compromise their principles. They can set up political advocacy groups to champion their ideas, win or lose, in season and out. The liberal money men now make major contributions to left-leaning 501(c)(3) public charities and 501(c)(4) lobbying organizations, and they take advantage of tax laws that, in the case of the (c)(4) groups, do not require them to disclose their contributions. They also fund efforts to change election rules, which they label “campaign finance reform” to attract good-government types like Arizona Republican John McCain. But at the same time they funnel millions of dollars into so-called “527 groups” that in theory are supposed to be independent of political candidates.

Last year the Wall Street Journal reported that since 2000 registered 527 organizations have accepted almost \$1.6 billion in contributions. (See <http://s.wsj.net/public/resources/documents/info-BgMoneychrtbk0712-17.html>.) In 2004, wealthy liberals gave almost three times more money to 527 groups than their counterparts on the right gave to conservative 527s. In other words, the liberals may shout, “Take the money out of politics,” but they whisper, “And put it into nonprofit political advocacy groups.”

The Rise of Web 2.0

While liberal billionaires have refocused their efforts, the Internet has allowed left-wing grassroots activists to form a virtual army of amateur political campaigners ready to protest, write letters to the editor, fund candidates, and attend candidate rallies with minimal advance notice. Web-based networking is a highly effective way to communicate and interact socially at the click of a mouse. The old grassroots left has given way to today’s “netroots” left.

No longer isolated in urban blue state enclaves, leftists are using the Internet to communicate with one another. Upset by the war in Iraq and angry that the Democratic Congress is inept and ineffective in combating the Bush administration, the left is mobilizing online through “Web 2.0,” the colloquial name for a continuing series of online innovations that is transforming the

Internet. It includes blogs, YouTube and other web video-hosting sites, constantly updated news feeds, social networking services like Facebook and MySpace, and many other online innovations.

These new services are very useful in their own right for non-political purposes but they are especially valued by left-wing activists who regard them as alternatives to the “corporate media,” their pejorative term for the elite liberal media companies that, they say, freeze out truly progressive ideas.

Just as the liberal billionaires admire the successes of conservative philanthropy, the

Dreams, and Altnet applied a top-down model to disseminate political information. By comparison, the Web 2.0 model looks to a variety of mechanisms to spread ideas quickly. Leftist online blogging communities like Daily Kos, MyDD, and Crooks and Liars have soared to the top of political web rankings.

Blogging makes everyone a pundit or an investigative reporter. With a blog anyone can also post an opinion, annotate and forward a news item, and share his activist impulses with the entire world.

Blogs also are proving to be potent fund-



Liberals used the graphic shown above after the 2004 election to mock states that voted to re-elect President Bush.

leaders of the online netroots left appreciate an earlier generation of conservative media activists. During the Clinton years conservatives flocked to talk radio and established web outposts to find new sources of information. Rush Limbaugh’s show and websites like FreeRepublic.com and Lucianne.com continually mobilized conservatives to protest the Clinton administration’s failings and plot new strategies of counter-attack.

The netroots have a similar goal. However, they have dramatically refined their techniques for media messaging. Earlier liberal websites like Raw Story, Common

raisers. Blogs have so far collected over \$21 million for Democratic candidates, according to the Trail, a Washington Post-sponsored blog commenting on the November elections. ActBlue, which describes itself as “the online clearinghouse for Democratic action,” claims to have raised more than \$59 million online since 2004, dwarfing Republicans’ online fundraising. RightRoots.com, which at its launch last year aspired to become the GOP counterpart to ActBlue, is off to a shaky start. The website had raised just \$41,744 in the 2008 election cycle as of July 31, 2008, according to FEC data.

Broadcast Media

The left's finely-tuned media message machine is not, however, restricted to the web. Long envious of conservative talk radio, liberals have repeatedly tried to create their own talk radio stations. Although two recent commercial efforts, Air America Radio and Nova M Radio, which was founded by Air America executives, have thus far failed to turn a profit they have inspired several hundred thousand people a day to listen to their offerings. Still, the dream of commercial left-wing talk radio inspires liberal broadcasters and listeners.

While liberal talk show hosts struggle to find a niche on commercial radio, the far left has grabbed hold of millions in taxpayer dollars to support nonprofit radio. For years National Public Radio (NPR) has been a source of left-wing news and commentary. But besides NPR, the best-known radio nonprofit is the Pacifica Foundation, which runs Pacifica Radio. The foundation took in \$56.8 million in contributions from 2001 to 2004, it disclosed on its fiscal 2005 tax return. Out of \$14,728,663 in contributions in 2005, \$1,973,507 of the total consisted of government grants. It reported net assets of \$7,524,550 at the end of fiscal 2005.

The foundation owns five stations across the country and funds the radio and television show "Democracy Now!" which is also broadcast on NPR and many college radio stations. The show has a loyal following on the far left and in academia. "I think it's probably the most significant progressive news institution that has come around in some time," said Robert McChesney, a University of Illinois media scholar.

"Democracy Now!" promotes extreme left opinions. Host Amy Goodman rails against invisible capitalist conspiracies and argues that politicians of both parties and the mainstream media are tools of a corporate ruling class. Goodman co-authored with her brother David Goodman, *The Exception to the Rule: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them* (2004). Amy Goodman was paid at least \$1 million a year from 2002 to 2007, according to Pacifica treasurer Jabari Zakiya. In 2006 Democracy Now! received a \$150,000 matching grant from the Schumann Center

for Media and Democracy, whose president is PBS pundit Bill Moyers.

Then there is Free Speech TV (FSTV), a satellite-based television station whose programs are distributed at no cost to cable systems and satellite carriers. Available on public access channels and the DISH Network since 2000, FSTV was created to comply with a 1998 FCC ruling requiring satellite operators to air community access programming. FSTV carries a video version of "Democracy Now!" along with various radical documentaries and higher-budget films produced in collaboration with other far left groups. Its website describes the



Liberal journalist Bill Moyers in a 2002 photograph.

station's mission as "[s]eizing the power of television to expand social consciousness, FSTV fuels the movement for progressive social, economic, and political transformation. By exposing the public to perspectives excluded from the corporate-owned media, FSTV empowers citizens to fight injustices, to revitalize democracy, and to build a more compassionate world."

FSTV is operated by the nonprofit Public Communicators, Inc. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit reported revenues of \$5,303,693 and year-end net assets of \$137,425 in fiscal 2005. The nonprofit took in \$2,499,921 in grants from 2001 through 2004. Among its donors are the Glaser Progress Foundation (endowed by Rob Glaser, CEO of RealNetworks) and the Tides Foundation.

On its website, FSTV identifies as its "partners" the radical antiwar group International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and Global Exchange. ANSWER's steering committee is headed by former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, who also heads the International Action Center (IAC),

which describes itself as "anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist." The IAC website states: "We also believe that best [sic] way to fight U.S. imperialism abroad is to wage an all out assault against the centuries-old war on people of color living within U.S. borders." (For more on ANSWER, see "The Politics of Peace: What's Behind the Anti-War Movement?" by John J. Tierney, *Organization Trends*, March 2005. The article summarized a book by the same name that Capital Research Center published in 2005.) The far left group Global Exchange was founded by Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the radical anti-war group Code Pink.

Probably few people currently watch FSTV programming, but more than a few listen to Pacifica Radio. In any event, both play a role in keeping radical activists informed and involved. They also provide young radicals with multimedia and journalism jobs, experiences that prepare them for future positions in so-called mainstream media outlets like National Public Radio. That kind of networking is seldom available to young people on the right.

For its program content FSTV relies heavily on the Independent Media Center (IMC), which operates Indymedia.org, one of the earliest Web 2.0 publications. Indymedia serves as a virtual information clearinghouse for far left activists, providing commentary and announcements, updates and live coverage of events. IMC was started in 1999 by radicals upset by mainstream media coverage of their street rioting during a Seattle conference of the World Trade Organization. IMC has since expanded and works with many online media "collectives" worldwide. These are radical left-wing websites that allow their "members" to post text, audio, and video reports online. When Indymedia receives these often bizarre and outrageous materials, a team of editors, using an email group discussion list, reviews them and decides which to disseminate on the Indymedia website.

If all of this sounds very haphazard but interconnected that's because it is. IMC boasts that it has no centralized organization. However, Riseup Networks, part of the Seattle-based Riseup Collective, hosts the web server for many IMC sites (an arrangement acknowledged by Riseup's Micah Anderson in a July

7, 2008 online post at <http://lists.indymedia.org/pipermail/imc-finance/2008-July/0707-7r.html>.) It's interesting to note that many IMC chapters are registered 501(c)(3) public charities.

Indymedia itself lacks tax-exempt status, but its donors can take a tax deduction by giving money through its fiscal sponsor, the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center. The Urbana-Champaign group, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, took in \$751,241 in donations from 2002 through 2005, according to its fiscal 2006 tax return. That year it reported revenues of \$182,898 and year-end net assets of \$108,616.

The left's media machine is driven by activists who claim that they are ignored by the "corporate media." But many independent media producers receive help from important nonprofits and wealthy foundations such as the Soros-endowed Sundance Institute and Bill Moyers's Schumann Center.

Blogs: How CAP Helps Set the Agenda

One powerful disseminator of liberal opinion is the Center for American Progress (CAP), headed by former Clinton chief of staff John Podesta. Like Rob Stein and George Soros, Podesta concluded that winning elections was not enough to control the country. In 2003, after Republicans won control of both houses of Congress, Podesta set up CAP with \$20 million in seed money from George Soros and the former mortgage moguls Herb and Marion Sandler. His goal: To rival the Heritage Foundation by wedding policy writing to cutting-edge media strategies.

CAP's roster of policy experts reads like a Clinton administration Who's Who and includes former national economic adviser Gene Sperling, former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota), and Elizabeth Edwards, wife of former Senator John Edwards (D-North Carolina). Like the Heritage Foundation, CAP distributes its policy studies and political analyses to Capitol Hill staffers and journalists.

But CAP also taps directly into the liberal online community with Think Progress, its heavily marketed blog community which provides a steady stream of news reports, commentaries, analyses and rapid responses.

It turns passive readers into active users who are encouraged to respond to its content by emailing their reactions, forwarding blog postings to friends, and linking it to other websites. (See "The Center for American Progress: 'Think Tank On Steroids,'" by John Gizzi, *Organization Trends*, May 2007.)

As a public relations strategy, this approach has proved extremely effective for CAP, largely because traditional journalists from TV networks and newspapers like the

habits. For instance, MSNBC's hard left anchorman Keith Olbermann and "Hardball" host Chris Matthews routinely lift stories from Think Progress (and other liberal blogs) passing them along without informing viewers of their dubious provenance.

This is no accident: Both work for a network whose executives have made a deliberate decision to gain viewers by repositioning their last-place TV channel as the network of choice for Bush haters. This came after MSNBC



David Brock of Media Matters for America

Washington Post and New York Times have come to count on blogs as an essential part of their newsgathering operations, something many on the right have not yet realized.

Blogs are now pervasive within the traditional newsroom. That's the finding of a January 2008 survey by Brodeur Partners, a unit of Omnicom Group, the worldwide marketing firm. Seventy-one percent of journalists surveyed say they read blogs at least once a week and nearly 50% said they valued them as a source for breaking news reporting. Seventy-six percent of surveyed journalists also saw blogs as valuable barometers of public and elite opinion.

Think Progress plays into these journalistic

executives noticed that Olbermann's constant attacks on Fox News Channel host Bill O'Reilly boosted his ratings.

Eager to boost viewership, Olbermann has continued to pander to the far left by adding "Special Comment" rants attacking Republicans, especially of the conservative variety. He has also partnered up with the liberal blog Daily Kos to create blog articles. Olbermann has continued to attack O'Reilly, denouncing him as the "worst person in the world" and donning a Bill O'Reilly mask while making a Nazi "Sieg Heil" salute. Olbermann's MSNBC bosses don't mind a bit. They've increased his salary and partnered with Air America Radio to air some of their TV programming on the radio network. Last month

MSNBC gave Air America talker Rachel Maddow her own prime time program.

Media Matters: Character Assassination Factory

Almost always, Olbermann's ammunition for his attacks on O'Reilly and anyone else who deviates from the liberal talking point of the day comes from Media Matters for America (MMA), a blog site created by former conservative journalist David Brock. Media Matters is financed by MoveOn.org, CAP, and Progressive Insurance chairman Peter B. Lewis. Although MMA pours significant resources into defending George Soros, the group denies that it is funded by Soros or his Open Society Institute. Its role in the left's new media strategy is to attack the press whenever it strays from liberal orthodoxy. (See "Media Matters for America: Soros-Funded Watchdog Attacks Conservatives," by Rondi Adamson, *Foundation Watch*, July 2007.)

Unlike some on the left, Media Matters does not claim that the national press corps has a conservative bias. Instead, it claims that the elite press is cowed by "conservative misinformation," its code word for giving any credence to conservative arguments. Media Matters attacks journalists for questioning Democratic politicians and it tries to block right-leaning media commentators from participating in public dialogue. It works in conjunction with liberal blogs, using sympathetic reporters and pundits to promote far-left messages to the mainstream media and to attempt to force right-leaning media figures out of the public debate.

One more recent example of MMA in action involved CNN Headline News host Glenn Beck, one of the few conservatives outside the Fox News Channel (FNC) who hosts his own television show. Like FNC, Beck's show irritates extreme liberals who dislike hearing conservatives speak in a mass medium.

Working with Think Progress, Media Matters misquoted a Beck interview on March 4, 2008 and implied that he was being serious when he asked a guest whether Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama was the biblical Anti-Christ. In fact, Beck was trying to dispel this notion. He prefaced his question with a melodramatic tone of voice and waved his fingers furiously to imitate

hysterical viewers who were forwarding an idea Beck clearly believed was ridiculous.

That didn't matter to the left-wing smear machine. Neither website retracted its assertions, nor did Olbermann who parroted them the same day, despite Beck's denials. (The Think Progress post is available at <http://thinkprogress.org/2008/03/04/beck-is-obama-the-antichrist/>. The MMA post is available at <http://mediamatters.org/items/200803050008>.)

"If you could actually see the video, you could see that I'm laughing as I say it, as I ask the question," Beck said on his nationally syndicated radio show later in the week. "The reason this is so unbelievably entertaining is because obviously the truth doesn't matter, but even more... it is so very predictable."

This is not the first time Media Matters has massaged quotations to attack conservatives. In 2007 it manufactured a media controversy by falsely claiming that Rush Limbaugh called anti-war Iraq veterans "phony soldiers." Limbaugh was not attacking American troops in Iraq. Instead he was referring to leftist activists who fabricate military credentials to bolster their anti-war arguments.

Media Matters was not interested in this inconvenient truth, however. It edited out the full context of Limbaugh's comments and emailed a doctored transcript to left-leaning journalists. (See <http://radioequalizer.blogspot.com/2007/09/rush-limbaugh-troops-controversy-media.html> for the full transcript of the show.) The controversy subsided when the true transcript became available. Limbaugh continues broadcasting and last month celebrated his 20th year of national syndication. His success is a thorn in the left's side. Together with congressional Democrats, MMA mounted a pressure campaign to get the Defense Department to remove Limbaugh from a military broadcasting service for troops overseas. (See <http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/democrats-go-after-limbaugh-2007-10-01.html>.)

"Good Journalism"

While Media Matters takes the low road in attacking conservatives, other left-wing media groups adopt a more high-minded approach—persuading young journalists

that good journalism is the same as left-wing opinion. Financed by the same billionaire donors who contribute to Democracy Alliance, Media Matters, and the Center for American Progress, these groups pay journalists to write stories that will be picked up by larger media outlets and to give young liberal students the training to be the journalists of the future.

ProPublica, a new nonprofit journalism outfit funded by the Sandler Family Supporting Foundation (\$1,250,000 in fiscal 2007), proposes to sustain "investigative journalism in the public interest" by supporting journalists who will write stories that have "moral force." This no doubt means articles attacking what liberals consider social injustice. Ironically, the nonprofit group Pro Publica, Inc.'s donors are Herb and Marion Sandler, who have arguably profited from homeowners' distress. In May 2006 they fortuitously sold Golden West, their California savings and loan, to Wachovia for \$25.5 billion—just before the credit crisis swamped Wachovia, which had foolishly acquired Golden West's adjustable rate mortgage portfolio.

Slate.com press critic Jack Shafer wondered whether the Sandlers' political mission was compatible with ProPublica's journalistic mission:

"What do the Sandlers want for their millions? Perhaps to return us to the days of the partisan press... ProPublica's Web site vows that its investigations will be conducted in a 'non-partisan and non-ideological manner, adhering to the strictest standards of journalistic impartiality.' But philanthropists, especially those who earned the fortune they're giving away, tend not to distribute their money with a blind eye to the results. How happy will they be if ProPublica gores their sacred Democratic cows? Or takes the 'wrong' position on their pet projects: health, the environment, and civil liberties?"

Pro Publica, Inc. reported revenues of \$1,450,000 and year-end net assets of \$1,365,523 in fiscal 2007. Rebecca Rimel, president of the liberal Pew Charitable Trusts, serves on the group's board.

Another beacon of liberal activist reporting is the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. A prestigious journalistic training ground much-esteemed in academia,

it is a place where non-leftist professors are nonexistent and radicals like Victor Navasky, former publisher of the Nation magazine, hold tenured posts. Navasky is also chairman of the high-profile Columbia Journalism Review.

Then there's the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy, a \$52 million foundation headed by commentator Bill Moyers. It has funded Moyers's own PBS program of news commentary as well as his son John Moyers's leftist website TomPaine.com. The elder Moyers is well-known for directing grants to left-wing groups through the Schumann Center and then using his PBS programs to promote them, all without disclosing his relationship to the groups.

The 2006 tax form for the Schumann Center shows that it made 26 grants worth almost \$10 million to such groups as the PBS program "NOW," which Moyers previously hosted (\$250,000); Free Press, an opponent of "Big Media" founded by media scholar Robert McChesney (\$1.6 million); Center for Digital Democracy (\$141,800); Texas Observer (\$500,000); and Middlebury College fellowships for environmental journalism (\$1.5 million) as well as the above-mentioned Democracy Now! (\$150,000).

Conclusion

All together, the left has managed to assemble a powerful media machine for itself, unequaled by any combination of institutions on the right; however, it is not satisfied with what it has achieved.

Liberal billionaires and bloggers are now mounting campaigns for so-called "media reform" which are designed to re-impose the so-called Fairness Doctrine and restrict the number of media outlets a company can own. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-New York), a member of the socialist Congressional Progressive Caucus, essentially admitted the ploy was designed mainly to block the allegedly nefarious influence of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Clear Channel Communications, syndicator of Limbaugh and owner of a number of radio stations. Hinchey says Fairness Doctrine legislation would require:

"that you have to provide access to anybody who has a different point of view on

a political issue. And, if Rush Limbaugh goes out there and shoots his mouth off somebody else has got to come up and say, 'Rush, you're full of baloney. Here's the real facts, here's what really happened.' And if any of the right wing radio so-called talk show hosts continues to do the same thing once this legislation passes, all of that stuff will end, and the American people will then begin to get both sides of the issue, or several sides, or many sides, or however many sides there are. They will have access to all the information. That is basic, fundamental, and essential to the future of our country."

That companies like News Corporation and Clear Channel are not hostile to conservatives and libertarians is enough reason for many on the left to support laws designed to restrict them.

The right must oppose these campaigns. More importantly, it must finally start to match the left's investment in new media. That means creating blog news sites and encouraging grassroots conservatives and libertarians to report the news and not just comment on it. In the information age, those who report the news enjoy greater influence than those who do not.

This influence is not impossible for the right to have. Already, websites like NewsBusters.org have steered news stories to the national media, such as Hillary Clinton's false remarks in March 2008 that she had been under "sniper fire" in Bosnia. The online right has experienced similar successes in blocking the Supreme Court nomination of Harriet Miers, and stopping immigration legislation that too closely resembled amnesty.

But the right can do more. Conservatives and libertarians must take their activism to the web. They should participate in mainstream online communities like the video website YouTube, the open-source encyclopedia Wikipedia, and social bookmarking services such as Delicious (formerly del.icio.us) and StumbleUpon where readers share stories with other community members. These services offer a tremendous opportunity to present freedom and free markets to uncommitted voters and citizens.

The institutional innovations of the conser-

vative movement that attracted the admiration of left-wing donors like George Soros and political strategists like Rob Stein are starting to lose ground. That's because the left is forging ahead online. It's learned how to leverage the power of technology and smart marketing. The only question remains: Will the right realize what it's up against before it's too late?

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PhilanthropyNotes

Tom Matzzie, a MoveOn.org agitator who headed the failed **Progressive Media USA** pressure group, has launched a liberal group that plans to intimidate donors planning to give money to conservative groups, the New York Times reports. “We want to stop the Swift Boating before it gets off the ground,” he said. The new group, **Accountable America**, plans to send a warning letter to conservative donors that says left-wing watchdog groups will cause them legal trouble and public exposure. **Chris LaCivita**, a GOP strategist involved in the 2004 Swift Boat effort against **John Kerry**, said the group’s efforts would backfire as donors react to the group’s tactics. “They’re not going to be intimidated by some pipsqueak on the kooky left,” he said.

Financier **Robert Hildreth** announced he has created the **National Immigrant Bond Fund**, which will bail out illegal immigrants arrested while on the job, National Public Radio reports. Hildreth started the fund after 400 undocumented workers were arrested at a local factory. “What shocked me was that within 24 hours, one half of those arrested, 200 people, had been whisked away, to Texas, to send them back out of the country as soon as possible, and this did not seem right.”

After two years running the **White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives**, **Jay Hein** announced his resignation effective August 29. It is unclear who will succeed him. Hein was the third director of the office since President **George W. Bush** created it in 2001. Hein said he plans to return to Indiana to care for his father who has cancer.

A great, great, great-niece of **Newcomb College**’s founding benefactor, **Josephine Louise Newcomb**, is challenging **Tulane University**’s decision to shutter the college. The donor intent lawsuit by **Susan Henderson Montgomery** asks the court to enforce the conditions of Newcomb’s will, which a local court previously ruled shows Newcomb “intended for Tulane to use the balance of her estate to maintain a women’s higher education college.”

The **National Football League**, which has tax-exempt status as a trade association, refuses to comply with new IRS rules that require nonprofits to disclose how much top employees are paid. The NFL wants Congress to change the rules for it, reports The New York Times, and argues it shouldn’t have to divulge this information because it doesn’t receive donations from the public. Senator **Charles Grassley** (R-Iowa) said all groups that benefit from nonprofit status should disclose salary information to maintain public accountability.

Meanwhile, the IRS has published final instructions for the redesigned Form 990, the informational form that most charities are required to file with the U.S. government, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reports. The new form is 11 pages long and has 16 supporting schedules. **Janne G. Gallagher**, vice president of the **Council on Foundations**, said she was pleased with the new simplified form, which has undergone its first major overhaul since 1979. “They’ve made a tremendous effort to be responsive to the comments they received.”

Almost \$99 million in donations have been received for the planned Martin Luther King Jr. national memorial, to be built on the national Mall in Washington, D.C., Cox News Service reports. Recent gifts include \$3 million from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**. Rising expenses have forced up the project’s budget to \$120 million.

Libyan-born **Emadeddin Muntasser**, who co-founded a now-defunct Muslim charity, has received a one-year prison sentence for lying to an FBI agent about visiting Afghanistan. The Boston resident was one of three men convicted of conspiring to trick the U.S. government into granting tax-exempt status to his nonprofit, **Massachusetts Care International** (not affiliated with CARE International). Prosecutors say the three men used the charity to conceal pro-jihad activities.