

Robert W. McChesney's The Death and Life of American Journalism, October 2009

It's an Exciting Time for American Journalism

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McChesney's solution to the upheavals in the US mainstream media is to ask the "public" to subsidize a "new system of independent journalism." Wall Street and the US Government (an insignificant distinction it seems) are doing just that for the financial services industry. If McChesney's suggestion was adopted to save American journalism (it does not need saving) the rich and powerful would still shape the consciousness, false as it is, of a pliant American public.

There is a revolution in journalism taking place and it's taken right from the play book of the American Revolution. Jefferson would be quite proud of it, I think. Electronic pamphleteers—call them blogs, independent media sites, the Net, print-on-demand publishers, trade publications—are pushing opinions and stories, getting factual local to global news out to the public, and generating interest in subject matter, many times controversial, that the national and local media elites ignore.

Their efforts may not be the caliber of Paine's *Common Sense* or the *Federalist Papers*, and the writing and editing may be a bit raw, but it's journalism nonetheless undertaken with a passion and, I note, without a phalanx of lawyers, shareholders, talking heads and media celebrity groupies. They operate largely through self-subsidy and barter. Moreover, "sufficient journalism" (McChesney leaves this undefined) in the young age of the Internet does not require journalism school, associations of journalists and other organizations that make for today's established journalism. In short, the blessing of the old school is not required.

The Internet--and the access it provides to think tanks, governments, corporations, data, trade publications--has freed individuals and publics around the globe from the need to rely on the journalistic equivalent of an interpreter. For example, if I want to know something about the US defense budget, I can access the gritty details from the US government websites, or find contact emails for specialists at various think tanks/trade publications. Who on earth needs a newspaper?

This is great news!

It's an opportune time for people the world over—and the pliant American public--to continue to use/develop Internet-era journalism tools to wean themselves off lumbering media organizations that see themselves not as monitors of local-state-global governments/corporations, but as equivalent to them.

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