

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR DON ALEXANDER
AS AMBASSADOR TO THE NETHERLANDS

I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE TO INTRODUCE DON ALEXANDER TO THE COMMITTEE. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE PRESENCE OF OUR COLLEAGUES, SENATORS DANFORTH AND BOND, DON CONSIDERS HIMSELF 50% KANSAN - 50% MISSOURIAN. BUT ALL THREE OF US ARE HERE TO GIVE HIM A 100% ENDORSEMENT.

DON IS UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE NETHERLANDS. HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THAT NATION AND ITS PEOPLE IS NOT SOMETHING HE HAD TO LEARN -- IT IS HIS BY BIRTH. NATURALIZED AS AN AMERICAN IN 1974, DON HAS BUILT AN OUTSTANDING RECORD AS A BUSINESSMAN IN OUR COUNTRY. FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS, HE HAS RUN HIS OWN VERY SUCCESSFUL INVESTMENT FIRM IN KANSAS CITY.

BUT DON'S INTERESTS ARE NOT LIMITED TO THE WORLD OF COMMERCE. HE IS ALSO ACTIVE IN SUCH CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AS THE FAMOUS LYRIC THEATER IN KANSAS CITY, THE KANSAS CITY ART INSTITUTE, AND BOTH THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI AND ROCKHURST COLLEGE.

WE HAVE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO HAVE ANOTHER OUTSTANDING KANSAN, HOWARD WILKINS, AS OUR AMBASSADOR IN THE HAGUE THESE PAST FEW YEARS. IN MY EXPERIENCE, IT'S PRETTY HARD TO REPLACE A KANSAN AND STILL GET THE JOB DONE AS WELL. ABOUT THE ONLY WAY TO DO IT IS TO PICK ANOTHER KANSAN -- OR, AT LEAST, A "50% KANSAN."

THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE JUST THAT KIND OF OUTSTANDING CHOICE IN DON ALEXANDER. I HOPE THE COMMITTEE WILL GIVE HIM SPEEDY AND UNANIMOUS APPROVAL.

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SINCE CONGRESS CREATED IT. THE QUESTION IS, HOW MUCH?

IS IT GOING TO BE \$1.1 BILLION, THE 50% INCREASE THAT CPB WANTS, OR SOMETHING MORE IN LINE WITH OUR DEFICIT CRISIS, SUCH AS THE PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDED \$825 MILLION? LET ME REPEAT: THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES SAYS PUBLIC BROADCASTING SHOULD GET 825 MILLION DOLLARS. HE DIDN'T SAY PULL THE PLUG. HE SAID GIVE PUBLIC RADIO AND TV 825 MILLION DOLLARS. THAT, TOO, IS A LOT OF MONEY -- AND IT'S MORE THAN PUBLIC BROADCASTING GETS RIGHT NOW. NOW, NO ONE WOULD ARGUE THAT WE'RE GOING TO BALANCE THE BUDGET ON THE BACKS OF PUBLIC RADIO AND TELEVISION. BUT IF WE'RE EVER GOING TO GET A HANDLE ON THE DEFICIT, WE HAVE TO START MAKING SOME TOUGH CHOICES. AND WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE REALLY TOUGH CHOICES WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS AHEAD, I THINK MOST AMERICANS WOULD AGREE WITH ME THAT THE CHOICE BETWEEN \$825 MILLION AND \$1.1 BILLION IS PRETTY EASY. CONSIDERING THAT ONLY 17% OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING FUNDS COME FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC TV AND RADIO WILL CERTAINLY SURVIVE ON AN 825 MILLION TAX DOLLAR DIET.

DISINFORMATION

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, THERE HAS BEEN TREMENDOUS INTEREST GENERATED BY THIS ISSUE EVER SINCE IT WAS SCHEDULED FOR ACTION THIS SESSION.

THERE'S BEEN TREMENDOUS DISINFORMATION, TOO.

SO LET ME SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ONE MORE TIME: I AM A SUPPORTER OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING. I WATCH THE PROGRAMMING -- A LOT OF IT. I HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO PLEDGE DRIVES. I HAVE ALSO HELPED SECURE FEDERAL FUNDING TO EXPAND PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICES IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN KANSAS, THE KIND OF RURAL AREAS THAT DESERVE MUCH MORE ATTENTION AND MANY MORE DOLLARS FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING, NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO AND THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE.

NO QUESTION, I AM AWARE OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL BENEFITS PUBLIC BROADCASTING CAN BRING TO RURAL AMERICA.

ACCOUNTABILITY & BALANCE: THE 1967 MANDATE

IN MY VIEW, THIS DEBATE SHOULD FOCUS ON THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL STANDARDS AGAINST WHICH TAXPAYER-SUPPORTED BROADCASTING MUST BE MEASURED: ACCOUNTABILITY AND BALANCE.

THESE ARE THE VERY SAME STANDARDS MANDATED BY CONGRESS 25 YEARS AGO WHEN IT CREATED PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO MEETING THESE STANDARDS, WE SEE PUBLIC BROADCASTING FALLING SHORT MUCH OF THE TIME. WE SEE A SYSTEM THAT FOR ALL ITS SUCCESSES, STILL LOOKS OUT-OF-TOUCH WITH MAINSTREAM AMERICA. IT IS A CONFUSING, CLUMSY AND INEFFICIENT BUREAUCRACY WITH NO POWER AT THE TOP, AND TOO MUCH FUNDING FLOWING TO A PRIVILEGED FEW.

IT IS A TAXPAYER-SUBSIDIZED SYSTEM THAT HAS ALLOWED ITSELF TO BE COMPROMISED BY CHUMMY IN-HOUSE WHEELING-AND-DEALING AND SOME TROUBLING ADVENTURES INTO THE WORLD OF PRIVATE PROFIT AND COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION.

IT IS A SYSTEM THAT FOR TOO LONG HAS GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO A DON'T-ASK-ANY-QUESTIONS ATTITUDE ABOUT TAXPAYER MONEY; A SYSTEM THAT CLAIMS IT IS DEDICATED TO "QUALITY PROGRAMMING", BUT IS APPARENTLY COMFORTABLE SPENDING \$500 MILLION A YEAR ON PROGRAMMING AND ANOTHER \$700 MILLION A YEAR ON ADMINISTRATION. NOW, PAYING FOR "QUALITY PROGRAMMING" IS ONE THING, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE THE TAXPAYERS ARE TOO EXCITED ABOUT PAYING FOR "QUALITY BUREAUCRACY".

IT'S NOT BIG BIRD, IT'S BIG BUCKS

SO WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE COOKIE MONSTER, AND BIG BIRD, AND MISTER ROGERS, AND THE KIDS ON THE ELECTRIC COMPANY. WHAT WE ARE REALLY TALKING ABOUT IS A TAXPAYER-FUNDED, MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR CORPORATION WHICH REACHES INTO ALMOST EVERY HOME IN AMERICA.

MAKE NO MISTAKE, IT IS STILL A BROADCASTING SYSTEM THAT CAN DAZZLE US WITH QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE, AS WE SAW IN KEN BURNS' MAGNIFICENT CIVIL WAR SERIES. BUT AS GOOD AS IT CAN BE, SOME OF US BELIEVE IT CAN BE EVEN BETTER -- MORE RESPONSIVE, MORE DIVERSE, MORE BALANCED, MORE ACCOUNTABLE.

IN THE LATE 1960S, WHEN I WAS A YOUNG CONGRESSMAN, THE PROPONENTS OF EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION, AS WE CALLED IT BACK THEN, SOLD CONGRESS AN AMBITIOUS PUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM ON THE STRENGTH OF ASSURANCES THAT IT WOULD NOT BECOME JUST ANOTHER BUREAUCRACY. ON THE CONTRARY, THIS NEW BROADCASTING ALTERNATIVE WAS GOING TO BE COMMITTED TO FAIRNESS AND BALANCE AND NEVER ALLOW ITSELF TO BECOME THE CAPTIVE OF IDEOLOGY OR PARTISANSHIP.

IT SOUNDED TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, WHICH IS WHY I VOTED AGAINST THE CREATION OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING CORPORATION IN 1967.

BIG CITY STATIONS, PRODUCERS POCKET BIG DOLLARS

TODAY, WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR ALL THOSE WONDERFUL PROMISES TO COME TRUE. WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF AN EXPLOSION OF COMMUNICATIONS CREATIVITY, AND PBS SEEMS OUT OF STEP. LOOK AT THE WAY IT SPENDS ITS MONEY. FUNDING - WHICH HAS GROWN, I MIGHT ADD, WAY PAST ANYTHING WE

IMAGINED BACK IN 1967 - IS CENTRALIZED IN A \$100 MILLION "PROGRAM FUND" DISTRIBUTED BY WASHINGTON. PROGRAMS ON THE NATIONAL PBS "FEED" ARE PRODUCED BY ONLY SEVEN OF MORE THAN 340 LOCAL STATIONS IN THE "NETWORK", AND OF THESE SEVEN, TWO STATIONS -- NEW YORK AND BOSTON -- PRODUCE BY FAR THE LION'S SHARE.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? WELL, TO TAKE A PAROCHIAL EXAMPLE, IT MEANS THAT STATIONS IN MY OWN STATE OF KANSAS RECEIVED NO NATIONAL PROGRAMMING GRANTS FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING LAST YEAR, AND THAT KANSANS WERE FORCED TO EAT FROM A MENU OF PUBLIC TELEVISION PRODUCED BY STATIONS EXCLUSIVELY REFLECTING WHAT MANY OF US REGARD AS AN EASTERN ELITE MENTALITY. IN FACT, ONE FRUSTRATED PUBLIC TV OFFICIAL IN MY HOME STATE RECENTLY CONFIDED TO MY OFFICE THAT HE JUST COULDN'T AIR SOME OF THE PROGRAMMING PBS IS PRODUCING BACK EAST.

I ALSO GOT A LETTER FROM ANOTHER FRUSTRATED PRODUCER AT A PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. SPEAKING STRICTLY AS A PRODUCER, HE TOLD ME OF THE CHILLY RECEPTION CPB GAVE HIS CREATIVE AND EXCITING PROPOSAL FOR AN EDUCATIONAL SERIES ABOUT AMERICA'S MULTI-CULTURAL HERITAGE, DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY. "WE CAN'T GET THE TIME OF DAY FROM CPB," HE WROTE, DESPITE THE BACKING OF A WHO'S WHO OF EDUCATION AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE NEA, THE PTA, THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, THE NATIONAL SCIENCE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE.

NOW, I'M NOT A TELEVISION PRODUCER, BUT WHY CAN'T SOME OF THESE SMALLER STATIONS GET A PIECE OF THE ACTION FOR A CHANGE, INSTEAD OF THE WELL-HEELED "BIG SEVEN" AND THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY?

CPB FUNDING: THE INVERTED PYRAMID

IN MY VIEW, PUBLIC BROADCASTING'S FUNDING SYSTEM SHOULDN'T LOOK LIKE AN INVERTED PYRAMID, WITH A HUGE BASE AT THE TOP FOR THE BIG BOYS IN THE BIG CITIES AND A TINY LITTLE POINT AT THE BOTTOM FOR THE LITTLE GUYS -- NO WONDER LOCAL STATIONS ARE CONSTANTLY BEGGING VIEWERS FOR MONEY, THEY'RE ON A STARVATION DIET. LOCAL STATIONS DESERVE BETTER, AND COULD BE GETTING THEIR FAIR SHARE IF LESS MONEY WAS GOING FOR BIG SALARIES, BIG BUILDINGS AND BIG EGOS.

MANY OF THESE SAME PUBLIC BROADCASTING POWERS TELL US THAT THEIR PROGRAMMING IS FOR EVERYONE. IS IT?

PUBLIC BROADCASTING AUDIENCE: UPSCALE

THE VIEWER MAGAZINE OF WETA-TV, WASHINGTON, DC'S PUBLIC TV STATION, ATTRACTS ADVERTISERS WITH SOME PRETTY STAGGERING STATISTICS. ACCORDING TO WETA, ITS CONTRIBUTORS HAVE AN AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD NET WORTH OF \$627,000, AND AN AVERAGE INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO OF \$249,000. ONE OUT OF EIGHT CONTRIBUTORS IS A MILLIONAIRE, ONE OUT OF SEVEN HAS A WINE CELLAR IN HIS OR HER HOUSE, AND ONE OUT OF THREE SPENT TIME IN EUROPE IN THE PAST THREE YEARS. THIS SEEMS TO BE THE TARGET AUDIENCE FOR PBS'S PRIME-TIME PROGRAMS. AS A WETA FUNDRAISER TOLD WASHINGTONIAN MAGAZINE, THE BIG CORPORATE GIANTS THAT UNDERWRITE THE MOST POPULAR SHOWS "KNOW THAT DURING PRIME-TIME, PUBLIC TELEVISION CAN DELIVER THE DEMOGRAPHIC THEY WANT: AFFLUENT, HIGHLY EDUCATED, THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS, THE SOCIALLY-CONSCIOUS AND WELL-INFORMED."

"EVEN MORE THAN \$40,000!"

ANOTHER REVEALING STATISTIC COMES FROM PBS ITSELF, IN A PROMOTION FOR ONE OF ITS SHOWS, THE FINE SCIENCE-ORIENTED "NEWTON'S APPLE". IN ITS PROMOTIONAL FACT SHEET, "NEWTON'S APPLE" PROUDLY BOASTS THAT -- QUOTING HERE -- "THE TYPICAL VIEWER OF 'NEWTON'S APPLE' IS A SKILLED OR PROFESSIONAL MAN, AGE 18-49, LIVING IN A HOUSEHOLD WITH CHILDREN, AND WITH AN ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF OVER \$30,000. THE COMPOSITION OF THE 'NEWTON'S APPLE' AUDIENCE TRACKS CLOSELY WITH REGARD TO EDUCATION, OCCUPATION AND THE AGE OF THE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD. THE PROGRAM IS VIEWED SLIGHTLY MORE HEAVILY, COMPARED TO THE OVERALL U.S. INCOME DISTRIBUTION, BY THOSE WITH INCOMES BETWEEN \$20-\$40,000, AND EVEN MORE HEAVILY (SIX PERCENTAGE POINTS ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE) BY FAMILIES WITH INCOMES OVER \$40,000", END QUOTE.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE QUALITY OF THE SHOW IS SOMEHOW VALIDATED BY THE "QUALITY", OR EARNING POWER, OF ITS AUDIENCE, ITS UPSCALE, TARGETED AUDIENCE: ALL THOSE MAKING "EVEN MORE" THAN \$40,000, AS THE SHOW'S PROMO PROUDLY BOASTS.

BY THE WAY, THIS EXCELLENT SCIENCE SHOW IS UNDERWRITTEN BY THE 3 M COMPANY, ANOTHER PUBLIC TV SHOW FUNDED NOT BY THE TAXPAYERS, AND NOT BY SOME PLEDGE DRIVE, BUT BY AMERICAN BUSINESS.

THE METER NEVER STOPS TICKING

LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT I'M NOT ARGUING FOR THE BROADCASTING EQUIVALENT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR PEOPLE OF KANSAS. MY POINT IS RATHER THAT LOCAL COMMUNITIES SEEM TO HAVE LESS AND LESS INFLUENCE ON THE PUBLIC TELEVISION SYSTEM THEIR TAX DOLLAR SUPPORTS. IT IS NOT JUST IN KANSAS BUT IN DOZENS OF OTHER STATES AS WELL, WHERE THE PEOPLE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PAY THEIR MONEY AND TAKE THEIR CHANCES.

SOME WILL ARGUE, IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE PROGRAM, TURN IT OFF. BUT

IF YOU TURN OFF A PBS PROGRAM, YOU MAY NOT BE WATCHING, BUT IF YOU'RE A TAXPAYER, YOU STILL HAVE TO PAY -- THE METER NEVER STOPS TICKING. AND, OF COURSE, MAYBE SOME OF THE PROGRAMS THAT KEEP ROLLING IN FROM NEW YORK, BOSTON, CHICAGO AND WASHINGTON WILL OCCASIONALLY REFLECT THE TASTES AND INTERESTS OF MAINSTREAM AMERICA, TOO.

CHUMMY DEALS, INSIDER TRADING & BIG PROFITS

ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT IT SEEMS TO BE MORE SENSITIVE TO THE INTERESTS OF ITS CLOSE FRIENDS THAN IT OUGHT TO BE. I HAVE BEEN DISTRESSED TO LEARN ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PBS AND PROFIT-MAKING COMPANIES SUCH AS BILL MOYERS' PUBLIC AFFAIRS TV AND ALVIN PERLMUTTER, INC., A SPIN-OFF FORMED BY ONE OF MOYERS' PRODUCERS. THESE COMPANIES ARE CAPITALIZED WITH TAX-PAYER DOLLARS BUT THEIR PROFITS GO INTO DEEP PRIVATE POCKETS -- SWEETHEART DEALS ARE FOR LOVERS, NOT FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

PUT ASIDE FOR A MOMENT THE ISSUE OF THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMMING THESE AND OTHER SIMILAR COMPANIES HAVE PRODUCED -- WE CAN AGREE THAT MANY OF THESE SHOWS DO REPRESENT QUALITY -- BUT THAT ISN'T THE POINT. LET'S FACE IT, THE MEDIA CAN WISECRACK ABOUT BIG BIRD, PUBLIC TV DEFENDERS CAN FILIBUSTER FOREVER WITH THEIR "QUALITY PROGRAMMING" RHETORIC, AND CONSERVATIVES CAN COMPLAIN AND COMPLAIN ABOUT LIBERALS.

BUT CAN'T WE WORK TOGETHER AND DO THE TAXPAYERS A BIG FAVOR BY DIRECTING SOME SUNSHINE ONTO ALL THE INSIDER TRADING GOING ON WITHIN PBS, THE BIG DOLLAR DEALS, AND THE BIG DOLLAR PROFITS?

WHAT CONCERNS ME IS THAT THESE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR COMPANIES HAVE BEEN CAPITALIZED BY TAX SUPPORTED FUNDS FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND TAX-EXEMPT FUNDS FROM CHARITABLE CORPORATIONS BUT AVOID THE TAX MAN THEMSELVES BECAUSE THEIR GRANTS ARE FUNNELED THROUGH STATIONS IN THE PUBLIC TELEVISION SYSTEM. AFTER PRODUCING THEIR PROGRAMS, MANY OF THESE COMPANIES THEN TURN AROUND AND MERCHANDISE RETAIL SPIN-OFFS FROM THEIR PUBLICLY-SUPPORTED WORK IN THE FORM OF VIDEO CASSETTES, BOOKS, AND OTHER ITEMS, OFTEN RECEIVING FREE AIR TIME TO BOOT FROM THE PUBLIC TELEVISION STATIONS ON WHICH THEIR WORK HAS APPEARED. AND NOT ONLY IS THIS PROFIT NEVER RETURNED TO THE GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS CREATED IT, BUT THESE COMPANIES CONTINUE TO COME BEGGING FOR TAXPAYER DOLLARS YEAR AFTER YEAR.

THE REVENUE FROM THE SPIN-OFFS OF PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE POWER OF MYTH, THE CIVIL WAR, AND THE FRUGAL GOURMET, TO NAME THREE VERY DIFFERENT EXAMPLES, RUNS INTO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS -- AGAIN, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT PURE CAPITALISM, AND PURE PROFIT. OBVIOUSLY, I AM NOT OPPOSED TO ENTREPRENEURS BUILDING THEIR NET WORTH THROUGH INGENUITY AND HARD WORK. FAR FROM IT. BUT I AM OPPOSED TO PUBLICLY FUNDED ENTREPRENEURSHIP. THE SORT OF ENTERPRISE I HAVE JUST DESCRIBED SHOULD BE SUPPORTED PERHAPS BY LOANS FROM THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, BUT NOT ANNUAL SUBSIDIES FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP

PROBABLY THE BEST, OR WORST EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC DOLLARS FUNDING A PROFIT-MAKING GIANT IS THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP, THE SO-CALLED NON-PROFIT CORPORATION BEHIND "SESAME STREET." FIRST, LET'S SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT -- "SESAME STREET" IS ONE THE FINEST PROGRAMS EVER PRODUCED FOR TELEVISION. ITS CHARACTERS ARE KNOWN THE WORLD OVER, AND IT HAS WITHOUT QUESTION MADE A BIG CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE TAXPAYERS HAVE TO MAKE A BIG CONTRIBUTION, TOO.

LOOK AT THE FACTS -- THE DOLLARS AND CENTS BEHIND SESAME STREET AND THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP -- AND THEN ASK THE OBVIOUS: WHY IS CONGRESS INSISTING THAT THE TAXPAYERS SEND THEIR HARD-EARNED DOLLARS TO A CORPORATION THAT HAS A STOCK AND BOND PORTFOLIO WORTH \$51 MILLION? WHY IS CONGRESS DEMANDING THAT THE TAXPAYERS SEND THEIR HARD-EARNED DOLLARS TO A CORPORATION THAT REPORTED TO THE IRS AN ESTIMATED TOTAL REVENUE FOR 1990 AT \$100 MILLION? WHY IS CONGRESS ASKING THE TAXPAYERS TO CONTINUE TO FUND A CORPORATION THAT PAYS ITS DIVISIONAL PRESIDENT WILLIAM W. WHALEY \$641,224, AND ITS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS IN SALARY AND BENEFITS? DESPITE ALL THESE STAGGERING BIG-TIME, BIG-BUSINESS PROFITS FOR A TAX EXEMPT OUTFIT, THE TAXPAYERS STILL HAVE TO SHELL OUT NEARLY \$15 MILLION A YEAR IN GOVERNMENT GRANTS. NOW, "SESAME STREET" DOES A GREAT JOB TEACHING KIDS TO COUNT, BUT THEY DON'T TEACH ANYBODY TO COUNT THAT HIGH.

RUSSIAN "SESAME STREET"? NYET, NOT WITH TAXPAYER DOLLARS!

BEFORE WE LEAVE OUR FRIENDS AT "SESAME STREET", LET ME ADD ONE MORE WORD OF CAUTION. AS WE SPEAK, CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT ARE TRYING TO DEAL WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE, TRYING TO ADDRESS THE CRITICAL NEEDS OF THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS AND THEIR PEOPLES.

FROM A SUPERPOWER, THEY HAVE FALLEN TO ALMOST THIRD WORLD STATUS, IN DESPERATE NEED OF ALL THE BASICS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED: FOOD, MEDICINE, SHELTER. BUT GUESS WHAT SOME PUBLIC BROADCASTERS SEE AS ANOTHER "BASIC" FOR THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE -- YOU GUESSED IT, "SESAME

STREET"! IT SEEMS THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP WANTS A PIECE OF AMERICA'S EMERGENCY SOVIET AID PACKAGE; \$20 MILLION TO BE EXACT, SO IT CAN BRING "SESAME STREET" TO RUSSIAN TV SCREENS -- THAT'S \$20 MILLION RIGHT OUT OF THE TAXPAYERS' POCKETS.

WELL, LET ME SAY THIS -- THAT \$20 MILLION HANDOUT, THAT HOPED-FOR GIFT FROM THE TAXPAYERS -- IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN. IF THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP WANTS TO PUT BIG BIRD ON RUSSIAN TV, IT CAN DIP INTO THEIR LAVISH INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO, OR ITS ONE BILLION DOLLARS IN WORLDWIDE SALES, JUST LEAVE THE TAXPAYERS OUT OF IT.

PROFITABLE NON-PROFITS

BUT IT'S NOT JUST SESAME STREET AND BILL MOYERS GETTING INTO THE LUCRATIVE SPIN-OFF GAME.

JUST RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING ENTITIES MOVING INTO SOME QUESTIONABLE TERRITORY, AGAIN WITH TAXPAYER DOLLARS APPARENTLY BACKSTOPPING PUBLIC TELEVISION VENTURES INTO COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE .

1) PHILADELPHIA CON JOB:

IN FACT, THE COUNCIL OF BETTER BUSINESS BUREAUS HAS ALREADY REQUESTED AN OFFICIAL FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION INVESTIGATION INTO ONE EXAMPLE OF UNETHICAL ADVERTISING ON PUBLIC TV, NAMELY THE PROMOTION OF THE "SESAME STREET LIVE" STAGE SHOW.

IT SEEMS THAT AT THE END OF A REGULAR "SESAME STREET" EPISODE IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA, A FILMED PROMO POPPED UP ON THE SCREEN FEATURING OUR OLD FRIENDS THE COOKIE MONSTER, GROVER AND BIG BIRD, TELLING KIDS THAT THEIR STAGE SHOW WAS COMING TO TOWN, A STAGE SHOW WHICH IS A COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE.

OF COURSE, PROFIT-MAKING AND MARKETING SCHEMES AND PRODUCT PROMOTION ISN'T NEW TO "SESAME STREET" AND THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP. IT IS THE SAME KIND OF CAPITALISM THAT SURROUNDS THE SALES OF "SESAME STREET" BOOKS, LUNCH BOXES, DOLLS, PUPPETS, BEACH TOYS, WATCHES, BOARD GAMES, TOWELS, SHEETS AND PILLOW CASES, SHAMPOO, BABY TOYS, DIAPERS, UMBRELLAS, BICYCLES, TAPES, VIDEOS, MOVIES, SANDBOXES, SWIMMING POOLS, TOOTHPASTE, CHAIRS AND TABLES, HAPPY MEALS, PAJAMAS, UNDERWEAR, VITAMINS AND BAND AIDS.

JUST AS PARENTS HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIABLY OUTRAGED AT SATURDAY MORNING CARTOON SHOWS WHERE IT'S SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO SEE WHERE THE SHOW ENDS AND WHERE THE ADVERTISING FOR CEREALS AND TOYS BEGINS, TAXPAYERS HAVE A RIGHT TO BE OFFENDED BY THIS PUBLIC BROADCASTING SALES GIMMICK.

UNFORTUNATELY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT TAX DOLLARS ARE BEING ABUSED IN THIS SCHEME, AND THAT CHILDREN'S WATCHDOG GROUPS HAVE COMPLAINED, BOTH THE TV STATION IN QUESTION AND SESAME STREET'S OWN LICENSING COMPANY HAVE REFUSED TO COOPERATE WITH AUTHORITIES, REFUSED TO TURN OVER ANY TAPES AND REFUSED TO ADMIT ANYTHING WAS WRONG.

2) "LEARNINGSMITH" STORES:

BUT THERE'S MORE. WE NOW SEE BOSTON'S PUBLIC TV STATION WGBH, ONE OF THE WELL-HEELED, BIG DOLLAR STATIONS IN THE PBS EMPIRE, MOVING INTO RETAIL SALES, OPENING UP A CHAIN OF "LEARNINGSMITH" STORES TO SELL WGBH-RELATED GOODIES, SUCH AS BOOKS, TOYS, ART SUPPLIES, GAMES, TOTE BAGS AND VIDEOS OF PBS PROGRAMS.

NOW, OPENING SUCH A STORE MAY BE A GREAT IDEA, AND IT MIGHT EVEN PRODUCE ENOUGH REVENUE TO EASE THE TAXPAYERS BURDEN, BUT WE'LL NEVER KNOW BECAUSE LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE ON THE PROFIT SIDE OF NON-PROFIT BROADCASTING, THE BOOKS ARE CLOSED, EVEN TO THE FOLKS HELPING PAY THE RENT FOR THE WGBH STORE, THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER.

AND GUESS WHERE WGBH HAS DECIDED TO SET UP ITS FIRST STORE? IN THE INNER CITY? IN DOWNTOWN BOSTON ITSELF? IN SOME NON-CABLE AREA? NO. IT'S OPENING UP IN WHAT THE NEW YORK TIMES CALLS "THE AFFLUENT CHESTNUT HILL MALL IN NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS". THE TIMES ALSO TELLS US THAT THE NEWTON STORE -- QUOTE -- "HAS BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL THAT ANOTHER STORE WILL OPEN IN HARVARD SQUARE" -- END QUOTE.

HARVARD SQUARE AND THE AFFLUENT CHESTNUT HILL MALL? IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS THESE PUBLIC TV STORES HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY TARGETED TO GO WHERE ITS AUDIENCE IS -- UPSCALE, SUBURBAN AMERICA.

UNFORTUNATELY, SOME PUBLIC BROADCASTING OFFICIALS ARE A LITTLE TENDER ABOUT DISCLOSURE, OR ANSWERING QUESTIONS, OR EXPLAINING INCOME AND PROFIT, OR ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT ALL THE TAX DOLLARS COMING THEIR WAY. BUT THE TAXPAYERS HAVE A DIFFERENT VIEW, AND MORE THAN EVER, THEY WANT ANSWERS, NOT A RUNAROUND.

ACCORDING TO THE NEW YORK TIMES, DETAILS OF WGBH'S "LEARNINGSMITH" STORE'S FINANCES WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLIC. IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN IT COMES TO PROFIT, THE PUBLIC DOESN'T HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW, EVEN IF IT IS "PUBLIC" TV.

3) \$14.95 SEX EDUCATION -- AVAILABLE AT A FINE VIDEO STORE NEAR YOU:

FINALLY, THERE IS THE NATIONALLY-BROADCAST SEX EDUCATION SHOW SEEN ON PBS A FEW WEEKS AGO. NOW, I AM NOT GOING TO GET INTO A DEBATE OVER THE CONTENTS OF THE SHOW, BUT WHAT HAS ME CONCERNED IS THE MARKETING

THAT GOES WITH IT.

THE SHOW, PRODUCED BY THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP, AIRED ONCE, AND THEN HEADED DIRECTLY TO STORE SHELVES ON VIDEOTAPE.

IN FACT, THE WASHINGTON POST CALLED IT "THE FASTEST AND MOST HIGH-PROFILE TRIP FROM PUBLIC TELEVISION TO HOME VIDEO IN THE HISTORY OF THE MARKET."

SO IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE SEX EDUCATION SHOW AGAIN, HURRY OFF TO YOUR LOCAL "LEARNINGSMITH" STORE AND PLUNK DOWN YOUR \$14.95. NOW, PBS DEFENDERS NEVER FAIL TO LECTURE US THAT MANY AMERICANS "CAN'T AFFORD CABLE", ANOTHER REASON TO KEEP PUBLIC TV ON THE PUBLIC WELFARE ROLLS. WELL, SO FAR, NOT ONE OF THESE PBS DEFENDERS HAS SAID ANYTHING ABOUT THOSE AMERICANS WHO CAN'T AFFORD PBS VIDEOCASSETTES, WHO CAN'T AFFORD TO SHOP AT THE CHESTNUT HILL MALL AND WHO CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY BILL MOYERS' LATEST BOOK.

BUT THE MARKETING GOES ON. LOOK IN THE LATEST ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE AND WHAT DO YOU SEE? A NICE HALF-PAGE AD FOR THE SEX EDUCATION TAPE, "FOR ONLY \$14.95...AVAILABLE AT FINE VIDEO STORES". THE AD ALSO INCLUDES A 1-800 NUMBER TO FIND OUT WHERE THE NEAREST RETAILER IS LOCATED -- NOTE, IT SAYS, "RETAILER". NOT ONCE DOES THE AD TELL YOU THAT TAXPAYER FUNDS HELPED PRODUCE AND MARKET THIS PRODUCT. AND NOT ONCE DO WE SEE ANYTHING ABOUT TAXPAYER ROYALTIES.

4) THE \$10 MILLION NEWSLETTER:

THERE IS ANOTHER RECENT EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND BIG DOLLAR PROFITS, AND IT OFFERS QUITE A GLIMPSE INTO THE KIND OF TAXPAYER-FUNDED WINDFALLS I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT -- AND THIS TIME IT HAS TURNED INTO A NASTY FIGHT OVER THE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS GENERATED BY PUBLIC TELEVISION EXPOSURE.

THE HOST OF PBS' POPULAR "WALL STREET WEEK", LOUIS RUKEYSER, IS NOW PUBLISHING A MONTHLY INVESTOR'S NEWSLETTER, AND IT'S DECIDEDLY BULLISH. BY MID-JULY, THE RUKEYSER NEWSLETTER IS EXPECTED TO GROSS ABOUT \$10 MILLION, A FIGURE THAT HAS MARYLAND PUBLIC TV HOPPING MAD. YOU SEE, MARYLAND PUBLIC TV PRODUCES "WALL STREET WEEK" AND IT WANTS A PIECE OF THE ACTION. ACCORDING TO THE WASHINGTON POST, MARYLAND PUBLIC TV BELIEVES MR. RUKEYSER IS --- -- QUOTE -- "CANNIBALIZING WHAT IT TOOK US OVER 20 YEARS TO CREATE" -- END QUOTE.

SADLY, THE TAXPAYERS -- THE MEN AND WOMEN HELPING TO UNDERWRITE ALL THIS BOUNTY -- ARE THE REAL LOSERS. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR DISPUTE SHOWCASES YET AGAIN THE PROBLEMS BROUGHT ON BY THE TROUBLING MIX OF PUBLIC TV AND BIGTIME PROFITS.

PBS DOCUMENTARIES -- "LEAN TO THE LEFT"

FINALLY, THERE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF ALL WHEN WE EVALUATE THE CURRENT STATE OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING, THE ISSUE OF OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE. YOU WOULD THINK THAT THESE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE PROSPERED BY THE GENEROSITY OF THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER WOULD AT LEAST CAST A FRIENDLY EYE NOW AND THEN TOWARD THE AMERICAN SYSTEM THAT HAS PRODUCED THE WEALTH THEY HAVE COME TO RELY ON. BUT THIS IS RARELY THE CASE. EVEN THE NEW YORK TIMES, USUALLY QUITE FLATTERING IN ITS VIEW OF PUBLIC TELEVISION, HAS NOTED THAT WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING, PBS DOES HAVE A "CHRONIC" TENDENCY TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTARIES THAT "LEAN TO THE LEFT". ACCORDING TO TIMES CRITIC WALTER GOODMAN, "NEITHER THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING NOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE HAS EVER COME CLEAN ABOUT THE CHRONIC BENT TO THE LEFT OF THEIR PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS."

DURING THE 1980S, THE PEOPLE OF AMERICA WHO WERE PAYING THE BILLS OF PBS SAW ONE DOCUMENTARY AFTER ANOTHER CHEERING ON THE COMMUNIST SANDINISTAS AND THE COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS IN CENTRAL AMERICA. THESE GROUPS WERE SO VIOLENT AND DANGEROUS THAT THEY WERE REJECTED BY THEIR OWN PEOPLE IN DEMOCRATIC VOTES, BUT THESE MANDATES IN NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR SEEMED TO MAKE NO IMPRESSION ON THEIR TAXPAYER-SUPPORTED CHEERING SECTION HERE AT HOME.

ONE RECENT INDEPENDENT SURVEY SUPPORTS MY VIEW THAT THESE TAXPAYER-FUNDED DOCUMENTARIES LACK BALANCE. PREPARED BY THE RESPECTED CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS AFTER A STUDY OF 225 PROGRAMS, THE STUDY CONCLUDES THAT "PBS DOCUMENTARIES LACKED IDEOLOGICAL BALANCE...AND THE BALANCE OF OPINION ON THESE ISSUES CONSISTENTLY FAVORED LIBERAL POSITIONS".

CONSPIRACIES, FANTASIES, & FRAUD

WE ARE TALKING HERE ABOUT POLITICAL DOCUMENTARIES, WHICH COME AS CLOSE TO BEING AN EDITORIAL PAGE AS AN INSTITUTION SUCH AS BROADCASTING HAS. YET IN THREE MAJOR SERIES AND IN SEVERAL FRONTLINE REPORTS ON THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY PUT ON THE PUBLIC AIRWAVES DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS, PBS ALLOWED THE PROPAGATION OF FANTASIES OF A "SECRET GOVERNMENT" IN CONTROL OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, AND OF CONSPIRACIES SO VAST THEY MIGHT EVEN MAKE OLIVER STONE BLUSH. ONE OF THESE SERIES, A THREE HOUR PROGRAM CALLED ON COMPANY BUSINESS, WAS BASED ON THE ACCUSATIONS OF A NOTORIOUS CIA DEFECTOR NAMED PHILIP AGEE. WE HEARD

ALL ABOUT AGEE'S LURID ACCUSATIONS IN THIS DOCUMENTARY, BUT WE WERE NEVER TOLD THAT THIS MAN WAS NOT MERELY A CRITIC OF OUR SIDE, BUT AN ADVOCATE OF THE OTHER SIDE. PBS MADE NO MENTION OF A FACT THAT AGEE HIMSELF NEVER BOTHERS TO HIDE THAT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE HE HAD SWITCHED HIS SUPPORT FROM THE AMERICAN TO THE COMMUNIST SIDE IN THE COLD WAR.

GLOOM AND DOOM MERCHANTS

PUBLIC BROADCASTING WAS BEGUN BACK IN 1967 TO BE AN ALTERNATIVE, NOT AN ADVERSARY. I TURN ON MY PBS STATION TODAY AND I HAVE TO WONDER: CAN WE BE AS BAD AS PUBLIC TELEVISION HAS PORTRAYED US? DO WE DESERVE THE DREARY, GLOOM AND DOOM REPORTS TELLING US "WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICA"? CAN'T THE TAXPAYERS FIND OUT WHAT'S "RIGHT" ABOUT AMERICA, OR IS THAT PROPOSITION SIMPLY NOT POLITICALLY CORRECT IN THE WORLD OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

NEO-MARKIST CLICHES

IN 1989, THERE WAS A SIX PART SERIES CALLED THE AMERICAN CENTURY WHICH UNDERTOOK A REVIEW OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY SINCE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. IT WAS FILLED WITH CRUDE AMERICA-BASHING AND NEO-MARKIST CLICHES ABOUT WHAT IS AT THE ROOT OF OUR POLICIES. BUT THE PRODUCERS FOUND THEMSELVES ENMESHED IN IRONIES THEY COULDN'T HAVE FORESEEN. THE VERY WEEK THAT SEGMENT CALLED "THE IMPERIAL MASQUERADE" WAS PRESENTING U.S. COLD WAR POLICY AS A BLOODY RECORD OF OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE, THE EAST GERMAN PEOPLE WERE TEARING DOWN THE WALL THAT THIS COUNTRY HAS STEADFASTLY OPPOSED AND EMBRACING THE DEMOCRACY THAT IT HAD GUARANTEED AROUND THE WORLD DURING THE PAST 40 YEARS. THE ONLY "MASQUERADE" WAS THIS PROGRAM'S PRETENSE TO OBJECTIVITY AND NON-PARTISANSHIP.

OF COURSE, THESE ARE ONLY A FEW RECENT EXAMPLES OF LIBERAL CHEERLEADING. IN FACT, THE NEW YORK TIMES -- NOT EXACTLY A CONSERVATIVE CHEERLEADER -- HAS BEEN FAIRLY BLUNT IN ITS REVIEWS OF PBS PROGRAMMING WHEN IT COMES TO EXPOSING BLATANT PARTISANSHIP AND LEFT-WING PROPAGANDA.

"OCTOBER SURPRISE"

IN THE PAST YEAR, THE FLAGSHIP DOCUMENTARY SERIES FRONTLINE HAS PRESENTED PROGRAMS INSINUATING THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN COMMITTED TREASON IN THE IRAN CONTRA AFFAIR; THAT PRESIDENT BUSH, NOT SADDAM HUSSEIN, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT SUFFERING IN IRAQ; AND THAT THE REAGAN-BUSH TEAM "STOLE" THE PRESIDENCY IN 1980 WITH A CONSPIRACY INVOLVING THE AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI AND AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN IRAN -- IT'S THE WACKY "OCTOBER SURPRISE" ADVANCED BY A FEW LIBERALS, AN ALLEGED CONSPIRACY WHICH THE NEW REPUBLIC AND NEWSWEEK MAGAZINES BOTH RECENTLY DECLARED IN COVER STORIES TO BE A FRAUDULENT, FICTITIOUS AND RIDICULOUS CONCOCTION.

I RAISE THESE EXAMPLES OF LEFTWING IDEOLOGY AND RADICAL BIAS HERE - AND I WANT THIS TO BE PERFECTLY CLEAR - NOT TO PROPOSE THAT THESE PROGRAMS, HOWEVER REPREHENSIBLE I PERSONALLY MAY FIND THEM, SHOULD BE CENSORED OR TAKEN OFF THE AIR. THAT ALL VIEWS SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE AIRWAVES IS WHAT FREEDOM AND PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS ALL ABOUT. BUT THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM HAVE THE SOLEMN OBLIGATION TO PRESENT OTHER, CONFLICTING OPINIONS AND CONTRARY POINTS OF VIEW IN THEIR DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMMING. AND THIS, I AM SAD TO SAY, SIMPLY HAS NOT HAPPENED.

AND SO I LOOK AROUND THE COMMUNICATIONS WORLD TODAY AND I SEE DIVERSITY, INNOVATION, OPEN ACCESS AND COMPETITION OF IDEAS EVERYWHERE - EVERYWHERE, THAT IS, EXCEPT IN THE HOUSES THAT PUBLIC BROADCASTING HAS BUILT, PLACES WHERE SUCH QUALITIES SHOULD BE MOST APPARENT.

I KNOW THIS: WHAT WE HAVE NOW IS NOT WHAT CONGRESS INTENDED BACK IN 1967.

EXPLODING THE MYTH: THE MOST POPULAR SHOWS

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE WATCHING, AND WHAT THEY'RE NOT WATCHING, ON PUBLIC TELEVISION. THE MOST WATCHED PROGRAMS ON PBS ARE NOT THE POLITICAL PROGRAMS OR THE OPERA PERFORMANCES -- WHAT MOST AMERICANS REALLY LIKE TO WATCH ON PBS ARE NATURE PROGRAMS. OF THE 25 MOST WATCHED PBS PROGRAMS OF ALL TIME, 13 OF THEM -- INCLUDING THE FIVE MOST POPULAR PROGRAMS EVER -- ARE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIALS. FIVE MORE OF THE MOST WATCHED SHOWS ARE FROM THE CIVIL WAR SERIES, TWO ARE "GRAND OLE OPREY SPECIALS," AND ONE WAS A LAWRENCE WELK SPECIAL. NONE OF THEM IS A CONVERSATION WITH BILL MOYERS, OR ANY OTHER LIBERAL JOURNALIST FOR THAT MATTER.

THE BEST NEWS IS THAT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIALS AREN'T PRODUCED WITH TAXPAYER DOLLARS. ON TOP OF THAT, THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAMS' APPEARANCES ON PBS ARE UNDERWRITTEN BY CHEVRON. YOU SEE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIALS DON'T NEED TAXPAYER SUBSIDIES TO BUILD AN AUDIENCE, TEACH OUR CHILDREN, OR WIN THE PBS SEAL OF "QUALITY." THESE UNIVERSALLY ACCLAIMED PROGRAMS, WHICH APPEAL TO CURIOUS MINDS OF ALL AGES, CONTINUE TO THRIVE ON INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL STATIONS AND CABLE TELEVISION ALL ACROSS AMERICA.

SO, LET'S FACE IT. THE BIGGEST STARS OF PUBLIC TELEVISION ARE THE SHARKS, THE GRIZZLY BEARS, THE TIGERS, AND THE POLAR BEARS FEATURED IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIALS -- NOT THE MCNEILS, THE LEHRERS, THE MOYERS OR THE GREIDERS.

IN FACT, PBS' BIG PRIME-TIME ELECTION YEAR OFFENSIVE FEATURING BILL MOYERS AND WILLIAM GREIDER HAS BEEN A RATINGS BOMB. ACCORDING TO THE MAJOR MARKET OVERNIGHT NIELSEN RATINGS, 97 PERCENT OF AMERICANS WATCHING TELEVISION CHOSE TO WATCH SOMETHING ELSE WHILE MR. MOYERS WAS TELLING US WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICA, AND WHILE MR. GREIDER TOLD US OF THE COLLAPSE OF DEMOCRACY. ISN'T IT TIME TO ASK, "WHAT'S WRONG WITH PBS?"

CONCLUSION

AS THE SITUATION CURRENTLY STANDS, THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY ARE SHORTCHANGED TWICE - ONCE WHEN THEY PAY THEIR TAXES AND AGAIN WHEN THEY TURN THE DIALS ON THEIR TELEVISIONS AND RADIOS TO PBS AND NPR.

AT THE AGE OF 25, PUBLIC BROADCASTING HAS REACHED MATURITY AND IT IS TIME FOR SOME ADULT CHOICES. IF THOSE IN CONTROL OF THIS SYSTEM INSIST ON CONTINUING ALONG THE PATH OF ELITISM, SWEETHEART DEALS, AND ONE-SIDED PARTISANSHIP - THEN THEY SHOULD BE PREPARED TO SEE PBS PRIVATIZED. MANY OF MY CONSERVATIVE COLLEAGUES IN THE CONGRESS HAVE ALREADY CALLED FOR THIS. IF PBS WERE A PRIVATE RATHER THAN PUBLIC ENTITY AND IF IT STOPPED RELYING ON THE TAXPAYERS' LARGESSE, THEN IT COULD ARRANGE ITS BUSINESS AFFAIRS AS IT CHOSE AND TAKE WHATEVER POLITICALLY CORRECT POSITIONS IT LIKED, AND THEN LET THE MARKETPLACE DECIDE. CERTAINLY, PRIVATIZATION IS CERTAINLY AN OPTION.

NOW, I AM NOT CALLING FOR PRIVATIZATION. IN MY VIEW, PUBLIC BROADCASTING SHOULD CONTINUE -- BUT IT MUST ADOPT REAL REFORMS.

OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE ARE THE TWO PILLARS UPON WHICH THE EDIFICE OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING WAS SUPPOSED TO STAND. EVEN NOW, A REAFFIRMATION OF THESE VALUES CAN PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR ITS FUTURE EXISTENCE. BUT WITHOUT A REAL COMMITMENT TO OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE, AND TRUE NON-PROFIT MOTIVATION, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHY THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER SHOULD BE ASKED TO SUPPORT IT.

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