

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 THE AMERICAN POWER STRUCTURE

As Chapter Two indicates, the American power structure is a complex framework of political, social and economic interlocks in the fields of business, government, intelligence, philanthropy, education, idea formation, and the mass media. People, ideas and money move from one of these sectors to another with smoothness. New organizations frequently are formed to fill a perceived need, and old ones are either laid to rest or are modified when their usefulness has become outdated. The national power structure has its tentacles in the state and local levels in order to maintain dominance, to keep informed, to establish consensus, to effect coordination, and to bring in fresh, new people who can be beneficially used at the national level. The prime political decision making positions have been filled from the same small group of Ruling Cartel

institutions for decades, regardless of administration. The Cartel control over the economy has been increased over the years as a result of the merger movements. This also has concentrated the control of wealth into fewer and fewer hands, so that a small number of decision makers in banks, law firms and key industries (such as the oil industry) have far-reaching effects on the rest of the world. This drive for concentration of economic and political power is so great and continuous that there seems to be no evidence at this time of a countervailing power to slow it down, much less to reverse it.

The structure of the mass media in the U.S. is the same as the rest of the American economy--concentrated. There are only three TV networks, two significant wire services, two major news magazines, and only two newspapers with significant national political importance and impact. There is an interrelationship among these organizations, in that some use the others' material, and some provide information and agenda setting functions for the others, particularly the print media for the TV networks. Because the leaders and significant employees from these media organizations also play roles in key Cartel organizations and the government, the prime U.S. mass media are closely tied in with the Ruling Cartel.

Two basic features of the American power structure are control and limitation. As Domhoff (1967) and Mills (1956) have shown, the entry into upper class status is carefully managed: the powerful Cartel people closely screen and limit participants in key organizations; employees are suitably socialized and closely scrutinized to ensure that they fit into the organization and fulfill its goals. Even rich capitalists cannot break into the Cartel's ruling circles on the basis of wealth alone, even though they might be very powerful within their own corporate empire.

Control and limitation are not just used to insure the ideological purity and efficiency of the ruling circles; they also are required in the attempt to keep control of people and organizations outside the chosen group. As we saw in the first two chapters, there are many means to do this. Control of the key economic institutions is a barrier to an outsider becoming too powerful. The political process is limited through the use of money and access to the mass media and through the inside game found in the relationship of the government with the prime Cartel organizations. Groups such as the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations limit policy formation; foundations nurture only those cultural and intellectual quests which fit their needs; and the favored think tanks and

most cities:

1. Public access TV on cable systems. We have already discussed this at length in previous chapters. Local groups can present their material either by producing their own programs or by appearing on established shows. In addition to the local experts being on the programs, the groups' out-of-town guests can appear as well. Furthermore, any videotapes, slides or films to which the groups have access can be used. Programs can be made on location where the activity is taking place, or arrangements can be made to tape in a studio.
2. Radio and TV call-in programs. Because most larger cities have these, it is very simple to have immediate access to large audiences. It would be highly advisable for progressive groups to have a "duty list" of people in their memberships to devote specific times and days to phone-in their opinions on these programs. Additionally, because the people who produce these programs are continuously looking for guests and subjects, change-oriented groups should contact the producers in order to provide people to be on these programs, either from their own memberships or from the flow of experts who are brought into town

universities perform the major work in the development of these Cartel requirements. Lower and higher education is always under close scrutiny in order to ensure that its production fits the needs of the system. The fact that the major organizations in these institutional categories are themselves interlocked provides a framework for control and coordination.

It is not just in the corporate sector where a watchful eye is kept on ideological purity. Universities also carefully control their staffs and faculties, and sedulously try to weed out the outspoken dissidents. The public school systems and state boards of education also closely scrutinize textbooks and employees to ensure ideological dependability. People and organizations which fall outside of this range of acceptability often find themselves targets for overt and covert activity by the police organizations of the country, including, occasionally, the military.

7.2 THE AMERICAN MASS MEDIA

As Chapter Three shows, concentration of media ownership and control is found not just nationally, but also

at the local and regional levels. It is not merely the fact that the electronic and print media are mainly in the hands of capitalists and are used primarily for making a profit, but the ownership itself is concentrated, particularly in the areas of distribution, audience and profits. And, as with the economy as a whole, the concentration is continuing unabated, particularly in the field of cable television where there was such promise of variety from its multichannel capacity. Even public TV provides no exception to control by corporate and power structure interest, both at the the national and local levels.

Finally, as the chapter on media content shows, the end result of control of the press is a range of opinion and information which generally falls within the range of acceptability within the ruling class itself. Anything outside of this range generally either is ignored, distorted or derided. Meanwhile, the alternative press struggles to survive the twin threats of economic starvation and predatory governmental activity, leaving many people and groups mostly dependent on the vagaries and distortions of the Establishment media for dissemination of their opinions and ideas.

This pervasive control of idea formation, education, and particularly the mass media is vitally necessary to

maintain societal hegemony. It is vitally important to the rulers that the people do not have easy and continuous access to unapproved views. But even more important is that the people internalize the hegemonic values so that they are immune to dissident information and opinions. It is much easier to control society if the people place themselves within the desired ideological prison of which the Ruling Cartel is the warden. That is why the control of the press is so crucial, because the people spend so much time with the media, particularly television.

But there are leaks in the system.

1. People can occasionally see that reality is different from what they are told in the myths and what they observe within the hegemonic information range. Sometimes the real world looms too big for the media to cover up or distort.
2. Because the press sells itself as the watchdog of the system, it must perform some muckraking or lose credibility.
3. There is information coming from the alternative press and from overseas with which the Establishment press must occasionally deal.
4. There are disagreements within the ruling class itself which is dealt with publicly. (Although not always.

For instance, the debate that raged within the Council on Foreign Relations over the Viet Nam War was not reported (Shoup and Minter 1977).

7.2.1 THE PUBLIC ACCESS TV ALTERNATIVE

It is into this information and opinion gap that the new medium of public access television on cable can step. It has the potential to play a significant role in informing the people, and it can lead toward a weakening of Cartel hegemony, if it is allowed to proliferate and grow and if the people use it in a progressive manner. This will not be accomplished without a struggle, because as Chapter Five shows, the Supreme Court and Congress have steadfastly torpedoed public access to the press--both electronic and print. The existing Burger Court and the recent activities of Congress and the regulatory agencies have been detrimental to the public's interest and have been working squarely for corporate desires. And at the local level across the country there have been many attacks on public access TV, both by government and by the industry.

The attitude of the Cartel was subtly stated by Justice White in the Red Lion case, which many people seem to

interpret as the prime victory of the people over the media. White said that it was not the rights of the media owners, but of the people which were paramount. What was crucial was the right of the people to "receive suitable" information. This same rationale was used later to attack public access in the Midwest Video II case. It is very clear: the people must not be allowed to speak directly to each other; Establishment control must be maintained so that the masses cannot have access to information which is "unsuitable."

However, public access TV is proliferating, developing audiences and generating excitement in most places where it is available. In Austin, Texas, the public access manager--Austin Community Television (ACTV)--has captured over seven percent of the viewing audience and has facilitated participation by a large number of individuals and community groups which have a wide range of interests and points of view. Yet, even with such a record of success (or perhaps BECAUSE of such success) ACTV is under attack by the city government and the local monopoly newspaper.

There is one program which has been appearing on ACTV for over five years which has been particularly successful--Alternative Views. A news magazine program which derives its information and guests mainly from

non-Establishment sources, Alternative Views has developed a large following in Austin, Texas, and is now being shown in several other cities in the country. It has attracted national and international attention, with many requests having been received for playing of the show in other parts of the U.S. as well as overseas. Alternative Views is not just a good example of how easy it is to start and maintain a public access news program series, it also reveals that the American people are thirsting for a broader range of information and ideas than that which they are usually served.

7.3 THE PEOPLE'S STRATEGY

In view of the enormous power and control which the American Ruling Cartel has over the political, economic and communications aspects of the country, the attack on the Cartel must come from a variety of sources using a multitude of media and methods. As we have seen, there are many weaknesses, contradictions and areas of instability in the system, particularly because of its capitalist and imperialist nature and in its present multinational,

monopoly, and militarist form.

The most destabilizing information which could be the subject of mass dissemination is the reality of the system itself--the type of information presented in this dissertation. If people were to learn the truth about the U.S. power structure, it would go a long way in destroying the myths which help to hold the system together and stabilize it, making it resistant to basic change. Citizens' eyes would be opened to how the country really is run, by whom, and for whose benefit. They would be able to see their place in the system and how they are exploited. There certainly would be resistance to this, because it is very uncomfortable for people to have their myths challenged. There also would be a negative reaction from people who think they are receiving a fair shake from the system or who identify themselves strongly with it. Finally, there would be great resistance from the power structures at all levels of society, but particularly from the Ruling Cartel itself.

7.3.1 ORGANIZATIONAL

This basic destabilizing effort of disseminating information about the realities of the U.S. power system is

only a part of the struggle. Before this can be accomplished on a mass scale, a combination of things must be accomplished. Because the Establishment media will not present such information, the matter must be brought to the attention of all the change-oriented individuals and groups which are also struggling, so that they will have the understanding of how the system works. They they can use this knowledge in their own operations and publicity. There is a wide spectrum of such groups and activities, such as unions, single-issue organizations, consumer groups, churches, neighborhood organizations, pressure groups, stockholder meetings, and school textbook groups.

The efforts of such organizations would be much more effective if they disseminated information on the Cartel and interpreted their information using Ruling Cartel analysis as a basis. There are other activities in which these organizations could involve themselves for even greater effectiveness. They could form umbrella organizations where their mutual interests coincide in order to increase their strength and participation. They can support progressive, independent and third party candidates. They can work in elections so that the most favorable candidates can be chosen. They can participate where possible in fund-dispersing organizations, so that worthy,

change-oriented individuals and groups--most of which are starved for funds--can survive and grow.

Probably the biggest hurdle is the unions, because their leadership not only is usually conservative, but the top people in most of the largest unions have already been co-opted by the Cartel by participating in such elite organizations as the Trilateral Commission and the Bilderbergers. It is mainly with the rank and file and with the union locals where change-oriented efforts would probably be successful.

7.3.2 MASS MEDIA STRATEGIES

In all these activities the use of the mass media is crucial. In too many groups a great amount of time is spent in activities which will reach only a few people, and these people are already convinced of the rightness of the point of view of the group. Newsletters and lectures only reach a few people. The masses are watching TV, listening to radio, and reading the local newspapers. This is where progressive people must go in order to reach the people. There are many strategies which can be used in addition to the traditional ones of holding symposia, lectures and demonstrations. There are several methods which are readily available in

to speak. It is not only local programs which are available. The cable channel which presents governmental and public affairs programming--C-SPAN--and Cable News Network have daily call-in programs with a national audience. There also are radio programs at night which feature call-ins, not only on stations with powerful signals which can be picked up in large parts of the country, but there is also one program, the Larry King Show, which is on the nationwide Mutual Broadcasting System.

3. Local newspapers can be approached through reporters or editors who might be sympathetic or interested in what a group might have to present. If the local monopoly newspaper will not do it directly, it sometimes can be pressured to provide coverage if the other media in town are talking about the subject, particularly either in the alternative media, if any, or on the electronic media.
4. The electronic media news departments may be more cooperative than the print media because of (1) their Fairness Doctrine requirements (if still enforced), (2) there are more competitive media outlets, and (3) generally their ownership and managements, although conservative, are not so closely allied with the local

power structure than is the large, local daily newspaper.

5. Letters to the editors are always advisable, although it is always problematic as to whether the newspaper will print the letters, or if it does, whether it will print them without distortion.
6. Guest editorial are sometimes printed by newspapers.
7. Press conferences. It is particularly important to keep in mind the operational schedules of the media so that the conference time will make it easy for the media to place the stories into their work routines. In this regard it is always more attractive to have a local or national notable or expert who has name identification. The local media are more likely to print or broadcast the information.
8. Journalism Reviews. If one is available locally, this is a good place to critique the local press. If a journalism review does not publish locally, you can publish in an out-of-town, prestige publication and follow up by ensuring that local media and politicians get copies of the article. Of course, it would be ideal to start a journalism review locally, perhaps in conjunction with high school and college journalism departments.

9. Articles. There are many publications which are constantly looking for interesting and provocative articles, ranging from scholarly journals and special interest magazines to the progressive press with limited distribution and the publications with mass circulation such as the "mens' magazines" which do some muckraking. Publications in the last category are Playboy and Penthouse, and examples of the progressive press are In These Times, Progressive, Nation, and Guardian. Additionally, many cities have small papers and magazines which can be approached.
10. Books. Although this is a huge task, writing a book can be very effective in reaching a mass audience. Textbooks can provide an alternative to the hegemonic selection now used in schools, particularly in colleges where individual professors can select the books to be used in their classes.
11. Wire Services and out-of-town newspapers. If an event takes place or if you present a program (either live or on videotape) you can make a press release about the content and send it to the wire services and the out-of-town publications as well as to the local media. Sometimes the local power structure and politicians are more sensitive to adverse publicity

which is carried outside of the city's borders than that which is published only in the local media.

Action must begin now and continue at an accelerated pace. Progressive people in the U.S. must join hands with their counterparts in other countries. Their adversaries are firmly transnational. Efforts need to be made to establish networks for dissemination of video tapes by using bicycling and eventually by leasing satellite space. (The next step would be to get the cable operators to carry the signal--a problematical task.) Funding sources must be found to finance the production and dissemination of this programming. Because most of the large money-dispensing sources are also Cartel controlled, the established foundations and wealthy individuals may not be the best places to solicit funds. However, through the combined resources of many progressive organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee, the American Civil Liberties Union and progressive churches, it would be possible to purchase space on a satellite. It is not very expensive. Even European sources of funding might be possible. Foundations frequently help groups or individuals in other nations when they would not do so in their own country for political reasons.

Cartel ideological hegemony must be broken, or at least

successfully challenged, before a liberating, mass movement can take place to overcome the existing system of power and control. To do this, alternative information must be provided to the masses of the people. They are mainly at home watching TV. That is where progressive people must go with their messages. NOW!