

THE U.S. POWER STRUCTURE AND THE MASS MEDIA

by

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by

Frank Spurgeon Morrow, Jr

1984

DEDICATED TO

My mother and father

Ethel and Frank Morrow

My son

Michael

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There are three basic approaches to the analysis of the U.S. power system. The Power Elitists say there is a small group of people, mainly from the corporate world, which controls the prime decision making positions of the economy and government and which receives the most benefits from the system. The Pluralists claim that power is diffused through many competing individuals and groups. Marxists have traditionally said that the economic system determines the power system, with the controllers of the means of production being the ruling class. They recently developed the concept of hegemony, a means by which the ruling class inculcates its values in the underclasses in order to maintain societal control.

A combination of the Power Elite and Marxist approaches most closely describes the reality of the U.S. power system. This ruling group, which is called the Ruling Cartel, controls the core economic organizations: the largest financial institutions and corporations. It

dominates the country's political institutions through a combination of holding the key decision making positions--regardless of administration, of financing political campaigns and by creating ruling consensus and policy formation through elite organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderbergers and Trilateral Commission. Idea and educational control is effected through an interlocking network of think tanks, foundations, corporations, universities and the government. Ideological control is maintained through many means, but particularly through the mass media. These also are dominated by the Ruling Cartel through the same mechanisms which are used to control the other institutions. Media content coincides with the range of respectable discourse within the Ruling Cartel itself, thereby shielding the American people from knowing the realities of the nation's power system. Thus, ruling class hegemony is maintained.

However, if public access TV is allowed to proliferate and grow, it has the potential to play a significant contributory role in the production of a greater variety of media content. It can be particularly useful in conjunction with the efforts of individuals and groups which are trying to change or modify the existing power relationships in the country. The success of an alternative news magazine show

on the public access channel in Austin, Texas, is an example of what can be accomplished in presenting information and opinions which are outside the hegemonic range of the Establishment media.

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VITA

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