
It is “necessary to reach a radical recognition of the scope of the crisis, to understand that a discussion of a ‘broken system’ must identify the points of rupture: special-interest influence on our politics, to be sure; but also the collapse of a journalism sufficient to name and shame the influence peddlers; the abandonment of basic premises of democracy by partisans who are willing to win at any cost; and the rise of a consulting class that makes ‘win at any cost’ politics possible by shaping a money-and-media election complex every bit as dismissive of the popular will as the military-industrial complex is.” Dollarocracy pp. xiv-xv.

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How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections, and Destroy Democracy (2005)
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It's the Media, Stupid (2000)
And by McChesney
Rich Media, Poor Democracy
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Related Books
Dick Bennett, Control of Information in the U.S. and Control of the Media in the U.S.
Dollarocracy
Special interests dominate Washington and undermine our democracy.

John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney

September 11, 2013  |  This article appeared in the September 30, 2013 edition of The Nation.

(Reuters)

“We’ve found through our experience that timid supplications for justice will not solve the problem,” declared the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967 as he announced the civil rights movement’s pivot toward the economic justice message of the Poor People’s Campaign. “We’ve got to massively confront the power structure.”

About the Author

Robert W. McChesney
Robert McChesney is Gutgsell Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois. He...
With those words, King spoke a language every bit as American as his “I Have a Dream” message of four years earlier. There are times for optimism and hope, and there are times for acknowledgment of an overwhelming challenge and the radical demand that it be addressed. Often they merge, and in these moments, great movements fundamentally redirect the nation. Tom Paine knew that. So did Frederick Douglass, and Jane Addams, and A. Philip Randolph. There is a rich American tradition of recognizing that some crises cannot be answered by tinkering at the edges of the problem. At such times, the people have responded with a boldness that ushered in new political parties or a New Deal, new understandings of the rights of citizens and the responsibilities of governments. And they have amended the Constitution, not once or twice but twenty-seven times.

After the Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United ruling, we began what would become a three-year survey of the state of American democracy, using the 2010 and 2012 election cycles as touchstones but focusing on a range of electoral, governmental and journalistic measures of democratic decay. The experience forced us to recognize the futility of timid supplications in pursuit of reforming politics and the media. We did this not as critics of the reform impulse, but as co-founders of a media reform organization who have maintained a long-term faith in the power of organizing and the potential of electoral politics to achieve consequential change. We retain that faith, along with a deep understanding of the value of continual prodding at the local, state and national levels. But we concluded that mild reforms are no longer sufficient to address a political crisis as far-reaching as any the nation has known.

The United States has experienced fundamental changes that are dramatically detrimental to democracy. Voters’ ability to define political discourse has been so diminished that even decisive election results like Barack Obama’s in 2012 have little impact. That’s because powerful interests—freed to, in effect, buy elections, unhindered by downsized and diffused media that must rely on revenue from campaign ads—now set the rules of engagement. Those interests so dominate politics that the squabbling of Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, is a sideshow to the great theater of plutocracy and plunder. This is not democracy. This is dollarocracy.

Tens of millions of Americans recognize the crisis. Congress is held in ridiculously low esteem. Almost two-thirds of the public say their government is controlled by a handful of powerful interests. At the same time, confidence in the media as a check on abuses of power...
is collapsing almost as quickly as the circulation figures of daily newspapers.

Yet when the evidence of the decay of democracy is pieced together, as it is in our new book *Dollarocracy,* the picture is even more troubling than most observers and activists imagine. To wit:

§ The 2012 elections were the most expensive in the Republic’s history, with spending of roughly $10 billion. They did not cost $6 billion, as was broadly reported last November. That figure was based on a sound study of federal election spending, but it did not account for the massive infusion of cash into local and state contests, as well as judicial and referendum votes, by the same wealthy donors, corporations and interest groups that fund national campaigns. The full picture shows that the worst fears of good-government groups have already been realized.

§ The biggest fantasy promulgated by pundits after the 2012 election was that President Obama’s victory showed that grassroots activism can still beat big money. In fact, Obama and his supporters raised and spent roughly $1.1 billion, while Mitt Romney and his supporters raised and spent roughly $1.2 billion. Yes, Obama’s campaign collected more small individual contributions than Romney’s. But the Democrat’s campaign also collected more large contributions than did the Republican’s. Romney’s relatively slight money advantage came from the higher level of spending on his behalf by interests like the Super PACs. Bottom line: in 2012, big money beat big money.

§ Big money—especially big corporate money—gets what it pays for. It’s easy to blame the absolutist demands of the Tea Party movement (which itself benefits from special-interest funding) or right-wing talkers like Rush Limbaugh for gridlock in Washington. But the truth, as Sunlight Foundation senior fellow Lee Drutman notes, is that “big corporate money is often quite eager to see gridlock. Just ask Big Oil if it would like an active Congress on climate issues. Or ask hedge fund donors if they’d like an active Congress on the taxation of carried interest.” Even when the process moves, as on the healthcare debate in 2009–10, the result is a reform that steers federal dollars to insurance companies, not single-payer Medicare for All. It’s even worse when it comes to debates about education and austerity; with the frequent collaboration of media that buy into the most simplistic spin, politicians become indistinguishable as they promote cuts and privatization schemes that answer the demands of billionaire projects like those of the Koch brothers and the American Legislative Exchange Council, Pete Peterson’s Fix the Debt campaign or the Betsy DeVos–chaired American Federation for Children.

§ The interests that pushed campaign spending to record levels in 2010 and 2012 are only getting started. That’s the overwhelming conclusion arising from our interviews with elected officials, candidates, campaign managers, consultants and directors of so-called
“independent” organizations. Spending on federal races doubled between 2000 and 2012. It will no doubt double again far more rapidly—and keeping track of it will become far more difficult, as wealthy donors and corporate interests increasingly rely on the subterfuges of “dark money.” As this spending increases, the influence of small donors will decline because, as the Center for Responsive Politics notes, “small donors make good press, big donors get you re-elected.” That's why, even after his relatively disappointing 2012 season, billionaire donor Sheldon Adelson was greeted by Republicans in Washington as a conquering hero. They knew Adelson was right when he explained: “I don’t cry when I lose. There’s always a new hand coming up. I know in the long run we’re going to win.” And with a $26.5 billion fortune, it's no sweat for him to keep placing $200 million bets.

John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney

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- See more at: http://www.thenation.com/article/176140/dollarocracy#sthash.hdzMxxSV.dpuf
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Also by the Author

Will Obama Defend Media Democracy? (Corporate Media and Consolidation, Regulations)

His next appointee for FCC chair could determine whether robber barons consolidate their domination of the public discourse.

John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney

After 'Citizens United': The Attack of the Super PACs (Citizens United, Corporate Lobbying, Media)

These new political monsters have let loose an avalanche of scorched-earth, negative campaign ads—and enriched TV stations in the process.

The Death and Life of American Journalism: The Media Revolution that Will Begin the World Again

Robert W. McChesney (Author), John Nichols (Author)
Best Books of the Month
Looking for something good to read? Browse our editors' picks for the Best Books of the Month in fiction, nonfiction, mysteries, romance, and much more.

Book Description

Publication Date: January 5, 2010

Daily newspapers are closing across America. Washington bureaus are shuttering; whole areas of the federal government are now operating with no press coverage. International bureaus are going, going, gone.

Journalism, the counterbalance to corporate and political power, the lifeblood of American democracy, is not just threatened. It is in meltdown.

In The Death and Life of American Journalism, Robert W. McChesney, an academic, and John Nichols, a journalist, who together founded the nation’s leading media reform network, Free Press, investigate the crisis. They propose a bold strategy for saving journalism and saving democracy, one that looks back to how the Founding Fathers ensured free press protection with the First Amendment and provided subsidies to the burgeoning print press of the young nation.

Tragedy and Farce: How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections, And Destroy Democracy


From Booklist

Nichols, a correspondent for the Nation, and McChesney, a journalism professor, excoriate the media for failure to hold politicians accountable for their words and deeds, thereby failing in their responsibility to protect American democracy. The authors examine current media practices in the context of press freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights and the concepts held by the Founding Fathers. The troubling recent presidential elections and the war in Iraq--and the lackluster reporting by the media--are the latest in a long trend toward a kind of corporate media that treats Americans as consumers rather than citizens. The authors compare manipulation of American news reporting and elections to practices of the Soviet Union at its strongest, with the political Right exerting more control of the news cycle. The authors also examine some promising trends--including the Internet and creation of independent media. The book includes interviews with John Kerry, Howard Dean, Barack Obama, and other key political figures, exploring concerns about the media's role in
Review

A short, fast-paced book, scenic like a good film script, steeped in the irony and horror of war. -- *The Los Angeles Times*

An eye for the perfect image, a wonderful ear for dialogue and a prose style that floats across the page. -- *Las Vegas Mercury*

Essential reading. -- *The San Diego Union-Tribune*

2002.

With a foreword by Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Ralph Nader.

Our Media, Not theirs! The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media examines how the current media system in the United States undermines democracy, and what we can do to change it. McChesney and Nichols begin by detailing how the media system has come to be dominated by a handful of transnational conglomerates that use their immense political and economic power to saturate the population with commercial messages. They reveal how journalism, electoral politics, entertainment, art and culture have all suffered as a result, and use examples of media coverage of the 2000 Presidential Elections and the War On Terror to illustrate the poverty of information corporate media actually provide. McChesney and Nichols also explain how that the Internet, which many once argued would open up the media system to a cornucopia of new voices and creativity, has been lost for the most part to the corporate communication system.

Our Media, Not theirs! contains proposals for making our media system more responsive to the needs of the citizenry and less dominated by corporate greed. The authors look at how political parties, grassroots movements and popular performers in other democratic nations increasingly have made media reform a political priority. The authors provide an analysis of the burgeoning media reform activities in the United States, and outline ways we can structurally change the media system through coalition work and movement-building. McChesney and Nichols go on to provide readers with the tools to battle for a better media. They offer an invaluable analysis, and clear ways to fight back against corporate domination of democracy.

REVIEWS
"An astute analysis offering compassionate solutions. I loved the book. It speaks for me." — Patti Smith

"McChesney and Nichols both critically assess our current media system and, even better, help us to imagine something different, mapping the transition from a period of individual frustration with corporate media toward one of collective action for their reform." —Janine Jackson
"John Nichols and Bob McChesney are right to argue that for our democracy to be renewed, issues of media ownership, monopoly and diversity must be on the agenda. Media cannot merely reflect the narrow corporate interests of a handful of powerful media moguls. For democracy to function, media must reflect the diversity of views, viewers and values of the whole of society." — Hon. Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

BY ROBERT MCCHESEY
Rich Media, Poor Democracy
By Robert W. McChesney

Digital Disconnect
How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy.  ROBERT W. MCCCHESNEY

"Once again, McChesney stands at the crossroads of media dysfunction and the denial of democracy, illuminating the complex issues involved and identifying a path forward to try to repair the damage. Here's hoping the rest of us have the good sense to listen this time."
A PARADIGM-SHIFTING ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTERNET AND THE ECONOMY FROM THE CELEBRATED SCHOLAR AND AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

Robert McChesney is one of the nation’s most important analysts of the media.
—Howard Zinn

Celebrants and skeptics alike have produced valuable analyses of the Internet’s effect on us and our world, oscillating between utopian bliss and dystopian hell. But according to Robert W. McChesney, arguments on both sides fail to address the relationship between economic power and the Internet.

McChesney’s award-winning Rich Media, Poor Democracy skewered the assumption that a society drenched in commercial information is a democratic one. In Digital Disconnect, McChesney returns to this provocative thesis in light of the advances of the digital age. He argues that the sharp decline in the enforcement of antitrust violations, the increase in patents on digital technology and proprietary systems and massive indirect subsidies and other policies have made the Internet a place of numbing commercialism. A handful of monopolies now dominate the political economy, from Google, which garners a 97 percent share of the mobile search market, to Microsoft, whose operating system is used by over 90 percent of the world’s computers.

Capitalism’s colonization of the Internet has spurred the collapse of credible journalism and made the internet an unparalleled apparatus for government and corporate surveillance and a disturbingly antidemocratic force.

In Digital Disconnect, Robert McChesney offers a groundbreaking critique of the Internet, urging us to reclaim the democratizing potential of the digital revolution while we still can.

Robert W. McChesney is the Gutgsell endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of several books on the media, including the award-winning Rich Media, Poor Democracy and Communication Revolution, and a co-editor (with Victor Pickard) of Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights. He lives in Champaign, Illinois.

Pub Date: Spring 2013
Format: hardcover
Trim: 6 1/8 x 9 1/4, 320 pages
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Control of Information in the United States
James R. Bennett

An essential reference book to the most important and relevant publications on the control of information in the United States, it includes books and articles on every aspect of this highly topical subject—from philosophical theory to the freedom of the press. It is the first bibliography to deal exclusively with this area and will be of interest to all those concerned with research in journalism, law, communications, and general American history.


Pages: 616
The selections of Parts One and Two describe a corporate state ominously separate from and dominant over the democratic political process that should direct it, while selections in Part Three suggest how the state might still be guided toward equity and justice for all the people through more diverse, equal education and media.

END US ECONOMIC INEQUALITY/CORPORATE MEDIA CONTROL OF INFORMATION IN THE US NEWSLETTER #1

Dick Bennett

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