

The Canadian Media Oligopoly Against Media Democracy

Monday 19 October 2009, by [MIRRLEES Tanner](#) (Date first published: 16 October 2009).

To observe that the North American media is dominated by corporate monopolies serving capitalist interests and squeezing out critical voices is to state the obvious. The state media in Canada - nationally the CBC and provincially organizations like TV-Ontario (TVO) - provide only the slightest respite from pro-business reportage; the CBC has been equally a key ideological support for neoliberalism, particularly in its news coverage of public policy and economics. Media concentration in Canada is now probably the highest for the major capitalist countries. The same corporations who control TV and radio also own the major newspapers, but they have also bought up many of the smaller local media scattered across the country as well.

The filing for bankruptcy protection by CanWest (which in fact is a media alliance between CanWest and Goldman Sachs via the deal which led to the takeover of Alliance Atlantis) is likely an important further development in media concentration in Canada. The proceedings should be watched closely (not least in that the Asper ownership group turned the CanWest media into key supports for Israel and Zionism, and the most right-wing news source in Canada). The bankruptcy could be the beginning of another phase of the concentration and centralization of communications capital. It will also likely further weaken regulatory capacities over the media monopolies (the regulatory commission now spending most of its time ensuring profitability and aiding the monopolies in getting around their own content rules), and the minimal efforts at cultural and communicative diversity in media content.

The need for a vibrant, radical media democracy movement has never been more imperative in Canada. The main forces here - represented largely by the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Media Guild, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, and the Campaign for a Democratic Media - are a beginning. But these forces all remain isolated from rebuilding the socialist movement in Canada - the only realistic foundation for a democratic media. In an important intervention on the Canadian media, Tanner Mirrlees explores precisely these issues.

Contents

- [The Canadian State and Media](#)
- [Deregulation: Media Convergenc](#)
- [Media Democracy and Socialist](#)
- [What might be done?](#)
- [Box: Media Ownership in Canada](#)

Since the mid-1970s, a neoliberal paradigm shift has occurred in Canadian media policy discourse. Moving away from an explicitly cultural nationalist and public interest approach to Canadian broadcasting and TV and film production, policy-makers embraced a point of view that emphasizes the production of culture for cold cash and the media as an industry. Culture – like nearly every other public good – has been subordinated to market imperatives. It is no longer presumed to be part of Canada’s “whole way of life,” but a bunch of media commodities produced by waged cultural workers in media corporations. As a 2007 report from the Conference Board of Canada commissioned by the Heritage Department entitled *Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada’s Creative Economy* declares: “the cultural sector helps drive the economy.” In 2007, the Canadian cultural industry directly contributed about \$84.6-billion – or 7.4 per cent – to overall Canadian gross domestic product (GDP). The production of Canadian culture as a media commodity apparently employs over 500,000 workers and contributes to a total of 1.1 million additional jobs in related sectors. In Canada, culture is an industry that is still supported by the state. “Our Government is stimulating the economy through investments in targeted sectors, including arts and culture,” said the recently appointed conservative Heritage Minister, James Moore.

The Canadian state views culture as a gigantic media industry and as an instrument of national integration. The Canadian state protects and promotes Canadian media corporations with policies and regulations that facilitate and legitimize capital accumulation. The Canadian Broadcasting Acts (of 1968 and 1991) limit foreign capitalist control of Canada’s media and promote Canadian media content. The 1991 Broadcasting Act mandates that 80% of Canadian radio and TV should be effectively owned and operated by Canadians, that Canadian firms must circulate media (news and entertainment) made by Canadian workers, and that the media ought to represent Canada’s multicultural identity. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC), established by Parliament in 1968, regulates the radio, TV, and cable corporations. The CRTC’s purpose is: “to maintain a delicate balance – in the public interest – between the cultural, social and economic goals of the legislation on broadcasting and telecommunications.” So long as Canadian media owners abide by a few CRTC Canadian content quota requirements (35% of songs played on the radio must be “Canadian”; 50%-60% of TV shows scheduled by networks must be “Canadian”) and contribute a percentage of their revenue to support Canadian media development, they receive monopolistic licenses to use our public airwaves. If they break the rules, the CRTC can impose fines or refuse to renew their license.

The Canadian state supports the profit-interests of Canadian film and TV corporations, newspaper firms, and magazine and book publishing companies. Start-up capital and tax-incentives are provided to firms by the Department of Canadian Heritage and its various sub-agencies. The National Film Board “produce[s] and distribute[s] distinctive, culturally diverse, challenging and relevant audiovisual works that provide Canada and the world with a unique Canadian perspective.” Telefilm is “dedicated to the development and promotion of the Canadian audiovisual industry” and provides “strategic leverage to the private sector, supplying the film, television and new media industries with financial and strategic support.” The Canada Council for the Arts administers cultural grants to a plurality of media corporations and small-scale cultural producers. Canadian media production is boosted by tax credits for corporations. The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit provides a fully refundable tax credit of up to twelve per cent of the cost of production to eligible Canadian media firms. The Income Tax Act allows Canadian advertising corporations to claim expenses for ads placed in periodicals which are 75 per cent Canadian owned and on TV stations that are 80 per cent owned by Canadians.

Canadian media capitalists and policy-makers have not developed a media system comprised of diverse public interest media or a vibrant national culture. What has emerged, due to a combination of capitalist strategies and neoliberal state policies, is a technologically integrated and super-concentrated globalizing media oligopoly.

The Canadian State and Media Corporation

s

The cultural executive of the Canadian state – the CRTC and the Heritage Department – has long tried to balance its commitment to the “public interest” and “national culture” with its overall role as a committee for managing the common affairs of the Canadian media bourgeoisie. The state provided an overall legal and regulatory framework for capitalist accumulation with the expectation that the media and cultural bourgeoisie would manufacture media commodities that popularized nationalism and increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP), both sources of the state’s legitimacy and expanded reproduction. There was a time when the media bourgeoisie obliged the state’s regulatory demands. This was largely due to the fact that the media bourgeoisie was weak. Fledgling Canadian media corporations positioned themselves as defenders and protectors of public interests and Canadian culture. They lobbied the state to protect them from an American media imperialist takeover. And this is what it did.

Canadian media firms grew larger and more powerful due to years of strong financial support and protection by the Canadian state. Once gaining the confidence to compete as monopolies internationally, Canadian media corporations began to rebel against the state’s public interest mandate and cultural nationalist regulation (while still demanding the state to subsidy and protect them). Since the mid-1970s, the Canadian media bourgeoisie have struggled to dismantle public interest and cultural nationalist regulations while maintaining a complex system of governmental support. The role of media corporations in capitalist society is to maximize profit on behalf of wealthy shareholders. The profit-imperative conspires against and takes precedence over public interest and cultural nationalist regulation. Media corporations despise public interest regulations and CRTC enforced can-content quotas.

Media corporations, however, have not abandoned the state or its regulatory apparatus. One of the greatest myths of media globalization is that there is an inherent conflict between sovereign states and media corporations. This perpetuates a simplistic neoliberal ideology about the separation of economics and political spheres in capitalism. It deters us from a more sophisticated materialist analysis. Media corporations need states. Media owners want a strong state and a strong form of regulation to facilitate and legitimize their profit-interests. Media owners want regulation that serves their interests; they criticize regulation that thwarts their interests. Currently, media owners want a state whose ultimate regulatory goal and function is to facilitate and legitimize profit-making nationally and internationally. Media firms have proposed a new regulatory regime which intends to free them from existing “public interest” and “cultural-nationalist” obligations while maintaining a system of subsidies. They want to appropriate public resources without abiding by public regulations. The new regulatory regime promoted by the media bourgeoisie is called neoliberalism – the purest ideological expression of class power in the media system.

Neoliberalism has its origin in the United States – the center of global media capitalism. Since the early 1980s, the U.S. imperial state has struggled to universalize neoliberalism on behalf of transnational media corporations headquartered within its territory. The neoliberal media policies of the U.S. have been generalized as the media policies of many nation-states in the world system.

Global neoliberal media policy facilitated technological integration, the speeding up of cross border flows of commoditized information and media, and the corporate takeover of many local and state-owned telecommunications and broadcasting systems. A world neoliberal media order reflects the interests of global U.S. media firms to penetrate local media markets and the interests of local media firms to penetrate global media markets. Though the U.S. aggressively promoted neoliberalism, this ruling class policy was locally embraced by Canada's media elite. In Canada, neoliberal media policy has five consequences:

- * **deregulation** – reducing or refocusing public interest regulation of the media to empower the corporate push toward convergence and concentration

- * **news monopolization** – the centralization of capitalist control over news production facilities, news workers, and news content resulting in an unfree press that lacks local source diversity and fails democracy

- * **privatization** – the transformation of public culture into privately owned media commodities through the exploitation of workers and acts of cultural dispossession using state-supported copyright regimes

- * **liberalization** – the relaxation of foreign ownership caps on hitherto public domestic telecommunications, broadcasting, and media production firms, and

- * **post-nationalization** – the displacement of quality local and national media by corporations that re-circulate American media commodities domestically and produce multi-nationally themed and branded-lifestyle media commodities for foreign export.

Robert McChesney argues that U.S. media owners “are in the enviable position of owning the very media that would provide any coverage of media politics to the general public. In general, that means that the news media avoid any discussion of media structure.” In Canada, this isn't really the case. Canadian media corporations report on media issues, but they frame the issues in a way that makes neoliberal media policy “common sense.” Media corporations attempt to dominate public discussion about media structure and policy. They attack the public policies and regulations that facilitated their original rise to power. Their control of the media in society empowers them to promote points of view that support neoliberal ideology while ignoring public views that do not.

Media executives and managers make neoliberal arguments to the public through the newspapers they control. “It's time to deregulate the broadcasting system” Quebecor President and CEO Pierre Karl Peladeau told the CRTC at a recent panel meeting in Quebec. “Competition promotes quality and helps the broadcasting horizon in Canada” he continued. Leonard Asper, President and CEO of CanWest Global Communications, stated: “The Canadian TV system is the best in the world.” It is the best because “Canadians offered unparalleled choice and diversity.” CanWest Global, says Asper, “is determined to keep this diversity and choice a reality for Canadian consumers.” Ivan Fecan, President and CEO of CTVglobemedia said: “We [at CTVglobemedia] embrace the future.” “We look forward to working cooperatively with the CRTC to rebalance our regulatory framework to preserve real choice for Canadian consumers.” Rebalancing the regulatory framework means a re-regulation of the media system on behalf of corporate interests.

On behalf of their owners, seemingly professional journalists promulgate neoliberal ideology through news editorials. Andrew Coyne, a neoconservative culture warrior for *The National Post*, consistently promotes a neoliberal media reform. In 2004, Coyne described CRTC bureaucrats as sharing a “totalitarian mindset” because they did not renew CHOI-FM's broadcast license. In 2005, Coyne argued that privatized pay-per-view cable TV channels have made the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation (CBC) obsolete: “it [the CBC] might have been needed at one time, but it isn’t any more, and never more obviously than when it isn’t there.” On September 12, 2006, in a speech presented at The Fraser Institute, Coyne called for the end of the CRTC. Media regulation was viewed as top-down and elitist taste-making process that affronted bottom-up consumer demand. In a 2009 *Macleans* magazine article, Coyne argued that the abolishment of CRTC Canadian content quotas and market liberalization would save Canadian TV networks.

Media owners and journalists disavow the public-ness of the media. They are trying to change the meaning of the Canadian media system by re-writing public opinion and state policy on behalf of present-day neoliberal and capitalist exigencies. Ivan Fecan, CEO of CTV, says: “If we can’t make money, we have no reason to exist. If using our best business judgement we determine that some of our [media] services can never make money, we must exist those services.” Media owners build consent to their un-democratic control of the media by promoting the free-market and describing their eagerness to satisfy the demand of individual consumers. Their rhetoric reduces Canadian media democracy to a branded media commodity. For them, the media is not something we collectively participate in or make, but something we must daily buy from them “on-demand.”

The argument, however, is preposterous. The Canadian media, as it is currently organized, has little to do with free-markets and democracy. It is an elite complex of CEOs, corporate lobbyists, and state bureaucrats. The state’s media policy and regulatory structures are influenced by media lobbyists. Corporate lobbyists have attempted to embed and consolidate within the state a neoliberal regulatory framework. They want the state to legitimize and efficiently facilitate the deregulation, privatization, liberalization and de-nationalization of the media. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) is the dominant lobbying entity for Canada’s media owners. It represents the vast majority of Canadian programming industries including private radio and television stations, specialty, pay and pay-per-view services. The CAB is the voice of media capital in Canada. The CAB’s purpose, according to its mission statement, is: “To serve as the eyes and ears of the private broadcasting community, to advocate and lobby on its behalf and to act as a central point of action on matters of joint interest.”

Influenced by lobbyists, Canadian state policy-making agencies and bureaucrats give the media owners’ class interests public legitimacy. They coordinate and mediate intra-capitalist collaboration and conflict within the Canadian media system. Though still claiming to make policies on behalf of Canadians in general, the state increasingly serves the particular class interests of media owners. The Canadian state privileges corporate interests over working class interests. Cultural-nationalist and public interests have been made tantamount to the *de facto* class interests of the Canadian bourgeoisie. Public interests in media (the interests of the many) have been articulated to capitalist accumulation interests (the interests of the few). The CRTC and the Heritage Department have implemented neoliberal policies, often without the consent of the public they are mandated to serve. At a 2006 broadcasters’ convention in Ottawa, Bev Oda, former conservative Heritage Minister, told an audience of media executives: “I’m with you. I’m one of you.” There is a revolving door between the Canadian state’s executive cultural committee and the boardrooms of the media industry. This symbiotic complex supports media concentration.

Deregulation: Media Convergence and Concentration

For much of recent Canadian media history, CRTC regulations limited media cross-ownership. But media owners lobbied the Canadian state to fundamentally change CRTC rules governing media cross-ownership. The deregulation of ownership restrictions occurred gradually in the 1980s, but was accelerated throughout the 1990s. The CRTC started allowing big Canadian media firms to own

multiple TV stations in large cities. In 1996 – the year the U.S. passed the neoliberal Telecommunications Act – the CRTC over-turned regulations preventing the owners of broadcasting, newspaper, and telecom corporations from merging their operations. As result, already large national media conglomerates grew even larger. They acquired and amalgamated TV broadcast networks, newspaper chains, and telecom providers.

In 2000, CanWest Global put up \$3.5-billion dollars to buy Western National International Communications and the Southam newspaper chain. This chain, formerly owned by criminal-capitalist Conrad Black, now controls the largest newspapers in Canada's major cities. Following CanWest's lead, Bell Canada Enterprises took over CTV and the *Globe and Mail*. Quebecor then took control of Groupe Videotron. And in June of 2006, CTVglobemedia acquired CHUM, adding CHUM's 33 radio stations, 12 local television stations and 21 specialty channels to this firm. Alliance Atlantis became part of CanWest Global and Quebecor took over the Osprey media chain.

The trendy word used to popularize these mergers was "convergence." Media corporations promoted convergence as a technical response to the new information economy and a new media environment. They promised to present Canadian consumers with more media content selections and to make such content accessible through more media platforms than hitherto available. Convergence was publicly branded as an all together exciting new age where Canadians could actively search for and retrieve media content from numerous sources: Internet websites, newspapers and TV broadcasts. Convergence was also represented as a benevolent act that would secure and protect Canadian "cultural sovereignty." Or at least this is what the media owners claimed. "It's me or Disney" said Ted Rogers.

Media owners persuaded Canadians to consent to media convergence by saying this would protect and promote our "cultural sovereignty." If we didn't support Canadian media convergence, then our culture would presumably be taken over by U.S. media corporations. Despite differences in national appearances, however, the media owners of the U.S. and Canada wanted and ultimately got the same thing: power and profits. By controlling every point in the media commodity chain – from content development to distribution – media corporations gained the ability to target audiences at all times of the day with multi-media branding synergies intended to maximize revenues. The CRTC's "de-regulation" of cross-ownership restrictions was a form of re-regulation for capitalist interests.

Due to neoliberal policy, a few Canadian corporations now control the lion's share of the means to produce, distribute, and promote media: internet and telephone services, TV networks, TV stations, cable TV channels, radio broadcasters and stations, newspaper publishing and distribution chains, and magazines. Genuine source diversity in the media has been undermined. The appearance of more media choice mystifies fewer sources of diffusion. The ruling Conservative party doesn't seem to mind. Former conservative Heritage Minister Bev Oda said that "The government recognizes that convergence has become an essential business strategy for media organizations to stay competitive in a highly competitive and diverse marketplace." In the name of "national competitiveness," Canada has become one of the most concentrated and technologically integrated media systems in the world. More than 84% of Canadian media is owned by eight media corporations that are controlled by a few ruling class families (see box below "Media Ownership in Canada").

Together, these eight firms comprise a national media oligopoly. They are each aware of the actions of rival firms; they compete and collaborate within but collectively dominate Canada's media landscape. The firms are not only national in orientation, but also, global. Institutionally, they emulate U.S. media firms, enter into co-production ventures with U.S. firms, and copy globally popular (American) formats. They accumulate super-profits by re-transmitting discounted American media content and downsizing newsrooms. Neoliberal media policy, implemented by the Canadian state on behalf of Canadian media corporations, has facilitated the intensification of the media

concentration we see today.

Given the consequences of concentration, it is no surprise that the majority of Canadians do not support it. The Canadian state itself has long been aware of how media concentration threatens Canadian democracy. A 2003 Report from the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled "Our Cultural Sovereignty" recommended that the state issue a clear policy statement concerning cross-media ownership before 30 June, 2004. No statement materialized. Media concentration continued to be facilitated by the state. In June 2006, The Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications issued a report which said: "there are areas where the concentration of ownership has reached levels that few other countries would consider acceptable." But nothing was done about it. In 2007, following CanWest Global's purchase of Alliance Atlantis Communications (this gave U.S. investment bank Goldman Sachs nearly two-thirds ownership) and CTV's acquisition of Chum Ltd., more than two-thousand Canadians, prompted by media democracy activists, demanded that the CRTC enforce domestic and foreign ownership rules.

To temper a growing crisis of legitimacy, the CRTC announced new ownership rules in January 2008. But the damage to Canadian media democracy had already been done. As Lisa Lareau, President of the Canadian media guild, stated: "The CRTC is preserving the current unacceptable levels of concentration and is not even adopting meaningful measures to stop it from getting worse. By their own admission, they are legalizing the status quo since they admit that their new rules are not being contravened anywhere in Canada."

Media Democracy and Socialist Media Strategy

The Canadian corporatist media system is un-democratic and un-representative. The media conglomerates care little for social justice in Canada. The CRTC and the Canadian state's ruling parties regularly fail to challenge the interests of media conglomerates. Twenty years of CRTC-induced neoliberal media reform has led to more re-transmissions of U.S. media content, the closure of local news stations, and hyper-exploitation.

Media reform and revolution are necessary, but will not happen without a long struggle. Media democracy activists, cultural workers within the state-capitalist media system, and independent media producers outside of it, are developing their own capacities to re-imagine policy, question the ruling class's official line, and challenge the system's structure and ideology. Within the media system, cultural workers are struggling against the intensification of their exploitation. And on the receiving end of the media flow, the couch potato media critic is no longer content to smarmily denounce the ideology of mass entertainment. More media is being produced by independent sources not affiliated with the state-capitalist media system than ever before.

What might be done?

1. Support the struggles of Canadian cultural and media workers. The media bourgeoisie exploits Canadian media workers. The Canadian Media Guild and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union represent Canadian media workers. These unions remain isolated from rebuilding the socialist movement in Canada. Socialists need to engage these unions, learn about their struggles, and offer support.

2. Democratize Media Policy. In the absence of democratic control of the Canadian state by diverse workers, activists, and citizens, Canadian media policy and the regulatory apparatus that

enacts it is nothing more than a site for turf wars between different sectors of media capital, each vying for more control. The media bourgeoisie invests time and resources to maintain a neoliberal regulatory regime conducive to its interests. It is time that Canadians challenge this regulatory order and demand the democratization of media policy. When the CRTC bows down to the demands of media owners and closes down the public airwaves to activist groups that seek to challenge capitalist ideology, fight it! The Campaign for a Democratic Media [1] advocates the reform of the media system and supports alternative, community and activist media. The Campaign lacks a Marxist analysis of the media but nonetheless provides important analysis of the Canadian media and coordinates social struggles to democratize it.

3. Encourage socialist public media intellectuals . Become a credible, relevant, popular, and widely cited socialist public intellectual, referred to by both activists and mainstream media pundits. The Left has a few public media intellectuals, but we need more. Who has the courage to outflank the ruling class's tastemakers in front of millions of people? Neoliberal and neoconservative pundits work within and are dispatched from think-tanks to the media daily. Who do we have? On May 1, 2009, Leo Panitch was interviewed by Steve Paikin of TVOntario's *The Agenda*. [2] Panitch relayed a socialist message in a clear, compelling and persuasive fashion. Even Paikin seemed convinced of its merit. On October 8, 2009, David McNally debunked Jonathan Kay's neoliberal ideology in a *National Post* forum on Michael Moore's latest film [3]. I want to see more socialist intellectuals on TV screens and in the newspapers. Make a list of "specialists" in certain subject areas (of course, all from social movements). Send these lists to the TV networks and newsrooms. Media corporations want free content and commentators to fill up time and space. Build a cadre of public media intellectuals. Dispatch them to the media to challenge the neoliberals.

4. Develop socialist new media production . Use new media tools (digital cameras, camcorders, computer software, internet, websites, Youtube, Googlevideo) to produce and distribute socialist analysis and messages. Build a community of media producers. Document and publicize the ideas of activist-intellectuals. Every meeting within the activist community is an opportunity to meet other activist-intellectuals and document their ideas and struggles. Follow a specific Question/Answer template that makes the message palpable to non-specialist audiences. What is the issue? Why is this issue important? What should or is being done to change the situation? What struggles are forming around the issue? What are the limits of what's being done? How has the ruling class responded to the struggle? What is the next step in the strategy? Where do we go from here? Publicize and promote the interview. Post video clips on YouTube. Circulate the interview across international networks and listserves. Send the clip to all of the mainstream networks and demand they interview you or the other activist-intellectual.

5. Engage in 'talk-back.' In the past, media broadcasting was a one-way flow. Information was produced by a dominant sender/source (corporate media networks) and distributed to a mass audience. There was no opportunity for activists to disseminate rapid responses to the corporate networks and reach a mass audience. The new media and the Web have changed this paradigm. Produce media content and disseminate this content to a large audience. The new media's interactivity and immediacy presents us with the ability to respond, present counterpoints to, and debunk the worldview expressed by the corporate media's opinion makers in real-time. Instead of waiting two months to publish a printed article or have it reviewed, use the new media to formulate a response to a particular pundit or issue immediately, and then post this response to the Web. Thousands of people are already using webcams and Youtube to do this. Additionally, bring camcorders to demos. Record your experience. Put the police under surveillance. Email video clips of the demo to the media networks, which are now relying on user-generated media content. You might also engage in "adversarial PR" against your intellectual opponents. Attend neoliberal and neoconservative conferences with comrades. Bring a camcorder. Create media events. Publicly

critique the neoliberal pundits; illuminate the class interests they serve. Post it.

6. *Learn from and use the media spectacle* . The Left has no shortage of erudite books and long-winded journal articles that document, with facts, excellent prose and solid reason, the capitalist disaster. Much Left activist-academic work is read by privileged classes that have accumulated “cultural capital” (being “in the know,” understanding the meaning of key words, university-level radical theory). I had no idea what “neoliberalism” was before I started my MA. Keep producing activist-academic work. Activist spectacle media, however, might be a more effective way of popularizing ideas. Gramsci understood the significance of popular culture to both ruling class and socialist hegemony. Fast and funny socialist messages might appeal to more people. Create emotional messages with images and music to stimulate the senses. The tendency to privilege logic, truth-telling, and cool reason must continue; but feeling, humour, and affect are just as important to the cultural struggle.

There are many ways to challenge the hegemony of the ruling class and its media. We can work against and through the existing and new media. The media is a contradictory institution. The media is a mode of capitalist production and a terrain of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggle. Marx the activist-journalist [4] knew this and struggled to bridge the gap between anti-capitalist media theory and action. We can too.

Box: Media Ownership in Canada

The major media corporations include: CanWest, CTVglobemedia, and Quebecor.

CanWest Global (owned by the Asper family) controls Global television network and E!, fourteen local television stations and twenty-one specialty channels (including HGTV, History Channel, TVTropolis, Showcase, Food Network, Movie Time, Fox Sports World, BBC Canada; thirteen daily newspapers (including the *National Post*, *Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, *The Gazette*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Leader-Post*, *The Star-Phoenix*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *Times-Colonist*, and *The Windsor Star*).

CTVglobemedia (owned by Woodbridge Co Ltd., Bell Canada, Teachers Pension, and Torstar) is a giant multimedia company; it controls CTV network and *The Globe and Mail* newspaper. CTV also owns twenty-seven TV stations across the country, with interests in thirty-two specialty channels, including the Business News Network, Bravo!, the Discovery Channel, MTV, MuchMusic, Star!, The Comedy Network, and TSN. CTVglobemedia also owns the CHUM Radio Division, which operates thirty-four radio stations including CHUM FM. Other CTVglobemedia properties include the Internet website workopolis.com, Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (which has interests in the Toronto Maple Leafs, Toronto Raptors and the Air Canada Centre).

Quebecor (owned by the Péladeau Family and with revenues of \$9.822-billion) is one of the largest communications companies in Canada. Its operating subsidiaries produce newspapers (Osprey Media Corporation publishes more than twenty dailies and thirty-four non-dailies while Sun Media publishes eight urban dailies, seven free commuter dailies, nine local dailies and approximately one hundred and fifty weeklies); cable companies (Videotron, the largest in Québec) and TVA Group (nine English and French channels). Quebecor also holds the intellectual property to a variety of music, books and videos and controls business in telecommunications, marketing and Internet.

Canadian telecommunication and cable firms including Shaw Communications, Rogers Communications, and Cogeco Cable play a significant role in shaping Canada's media landscape; Corus Entertainment and Astral Media are important radio and TV production companies.

Shaw Communications (revenues of \$2.4-billion in 2006) is a Canadian telecommunications company headquartered in Calgary, Alberta that commodifies and sells digital telephone, internet and TV services.

Rogers Communications (revenues of \$1.95-billion in 2008) is a leading service provider of Wireless, Cable TV, High Speed Internet and Home Phone. It holds TV networks such as five City-TV (five stations), OMNI; it broadcasts speciality television channels including Sportsnet, The Shopping Channel, and others. Rogers Media Broadcasting controls forty-five radio stations; it also produces dozens of popular magazines including *Maclean's*, *Canadian Business Châtelaine*, *FLARE*, *Hello!*, *L'actualité*, *MoneySense*, and *Today's Parent*.

Cogeco Cable (revenues of \$746.9-million in 2006) is the final major cable TV distributor in Canada (with operations primarily in Quebec and Ontario); it sells analogue and digital TV, high-speed Internet and VoIP telephonic services.

Corus Entertainment (revenues of \$768.7-million in 2008) is a leading Canadian specialty television and radio producer; its majority is held by the company's founder JR Shaw and his family, which also owns cable operator Shaw Communications. Corus Entertainment controls numerous TV stations (CHEX-TV, CKWS-TV, and CHEX-TV), specialty TV channels (CMT Canada Cosmopolitan TV, Discovery Kids, SCREAM, Teletatino, Teletoon, Teletoon Retro, Treehouse TV, YTV, Viva, and W Network), premium pay-per-view TV channels (Movie Central and Encore Avenue), TV advertising production services (Corus Custom Networks), more than fifty radio stations (including Q107 Toronto and Country 105 Calgary), and children's book publishing (Kids Can Press) and animation production studios (Nelvana).

Astral Media (revenues of \$865-million in 2008) is the largest radio broadcaster in Canada; it owns radio stations in eight provinces, and is a major player in premium cable and specialty television in Canada (The Movie Network, Family, Teletoon, Canal D, etc.).

P.S.

* From The Bullet, Socialist Project • E-Bulletin No. 261
October 16, 2009:

<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/261.php#continue>

* Tanner Mirrlees is the Relay culture editor. This is a revised version of an article that first appeared in Relay #26.

Footnotes

[1] www.democraticmedia.ca

[2] http://www.tvo.org/cfm/tvoorg/theagenda/index.cfm?page_id=7&bpn=779503&ts=2009-05-0

1+20:00:35.0

[3] [Jonathan Kay vs. David McNally on capitalism, communism, and what Michael Moore has to say about America](#)

[4] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/newspapers/index.htm>