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PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

By the We Interrupt Your Regularly Scheduled Programming Coalition (WIYRSPC)

March 24, 2003

Program Description

We propose a partnership with WTTW to create twice-monthly, live, prime time public forum programs with a one hour independent documentary lead-in and one hour of panel and audience discussion following. Special forums on the topic of “No More Wars!” are needed immediately, although program topics are to cover all issues of vital concern to working people of the greater Chicago area. Each program is to be fully interactive with audience comments, e-mails, faxes and phone-ins. The forums are to be held at studio or community sites. The guest speaker panels are to consist of a diverse blend of articulate but nearly invisible national and local spokespersons representing working people’s organizations and perspectives.

WTTW has been producing live public forums for years. What is different here is that we propose to partner with WTTW in “filling in the blanks” of host, topic, film lead-in, and guest panelists.

Negotiable Items:

Additional advance promotion; additional showings; partnership on film, panelists and hosts; our co-producers/liaisons advise the producers and director; we receive group and individual production credits; setting design; screens and graphics; budgeting for expenses; compensation for certain workers’ time.

Program Ideas Include:

Depleted uranium; Afghan prisoner of war massacre; possible war against Iran; possible war against North Korea; the Israel/Palestine conflict; possible nuclear escalation between India and Pakistan; the Colombian conflict; the international arms trade; the UN and international law; star wars; more tax breaks for the rich; media ownership; assaults on civil liberties; immigration issues; labor issues including workplace health and safety and the right to organize; the economy; public education in Illinois; equal pay/women’s rights; health care; other.

Program Title:

To be determined. (possible working title: “Bughouse Film Forum”)

Citizenship, Diversity and Excellence

This programming partnership proposal conforms to the central missions, governing laws and guiding principles of public broadcasting in Chicago, especially public broadcasting's foremost doctrines of citizenship, diversity, and excellence.

A democracy cannot exist without the active engagement of all its citizens - not just those persons and concerns wealthy enough to gain access to the centers of power through political influence and the mass media. The Public Broadcasting Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1967, calls for a service that will "*address the needs of the unserved and underserved audiences*". The 1967 Report of the Carnegie Commission, which led to that Act, specifically calls for a service that will provide "*a forum for debate and controversy*" (emphasis not in original) and, again, "*a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard*" - a service that will "*enhance citizenship and public service*". The CPB also seeks to "*enhance the citizenship of all Americans*", while PBS requests a service that will "*encourage the active involvement of citizens to act collectively to address social challenges*". PBS also seeks "*audience participation*" and programming that will "*treat complex social issues completely (and) provide forums for deliberation*" (emphasis not in original). Lastly, WTTW seeks an "*agent for change*".

In these times of robust misinformation, division and fear, our film and discussion forums partnership proposal represents a sorely needed tool that can assist WTTW to fulfill public broadcasting's various obligations to enhance citizenship. Together, we can help to bring back those democratic American values that we cherish and hold dearly but have been lost and stolen.

Public broadcasting and Congress are again quite clear when it comes to the priceless value of diversity. The 1967 Act demands that we create an "*alternative*" that will "*express diversity*" and "*help us to see America whole, in all its diversity*". Carnegie (reiterated by the CPB) asks for a system that "*addresses the needs of unserved and underserved audiences, particularly children and minorities*". PBS asks for "*diverse points of view*" through a service that will "*provide multiple viewpoints*". WTTW's statement speaks of "*many audiences*". By actively seeking and presenting diverse and articulate spokespersons and quality independent issue documentaries representing the paramount concerns of working people, and by hearing their concerns directly, we can begin to see the whole picture. Not just the view of the select few. Marginalization can thus be supplanted by inclusion and democracy can mend and grow.

Excellence, through innovation and risk-taking, is a precept of public broadcasting that will distinguish it from mainstream broadcasting. The 1967 Act requires an "*alternative*" that will "*express...excellence*" and involve "*creative risks*". Carnegie states, "*We seek for the citizens the freedom to view, to see programs that the present system, by its incompleteness, denies*". CPB wants to "*encourage creative risks*". PBS values "*risk-taking*" and programs that are "*innovative in format, structure, and approach*" and "*educational*". Realizing the needs other broadcasters will not or cannot address, WTTW asks for programming that will "*better serve our community*". A documentary film and discussion forum as described herein substantially meets or exceeds all of public broadcasting's criteria related to excellence.

Conclusion

Together, through our shared values of citizenship, diversity and excellence, WTTW and our organization can and will encourage and enhance active and deeper civic engagement and democratic participation. Our mutual passion must be to collectively address social challenges as an agent of change to better serve our community in a fully non-commercial manner. The creative risk inherent in this innovative working people's community film and forum proposal has to be taken. We must try to know what it is to be many in one as a just and peaceful global community. Our dire social predicament and the principles of public broadcasting demand it. We can't afford not to.



Human rights activist Kathy Kelly has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and is the founder of the Chicago-based group *Voices in the Wilderness*, which works in support of the people of Iraq. Writing from Baghdad, she concludes her letter, published March 19th, with the following lines from the song "Anthem", written by Leonard Cohen:

*"Ring the bell that still can ring.
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in."*

Sources:

- U.S. Congress: Public Broadcasting Act of 1967
- Carnegie Commission: "Public Television: A Program for Action"(1967)
- CPB Mission Statement, adopted July 13, 1999 by the CPB Board of Directors
<http://www.cpb.org/about/corp/mission.html>
- PBS Mission - Pat Mitchell, President and CEO PBS
<http://www.pbs.org/producers/mission/>
- WTTW Mission Statement <http://www.networkchicago.com/about.htm>;
About WTTW <http://www.networkchicago.com/aboutwttw.htm>

Appendix 1

(The following statement was read by Scott Sanders at the April 2, 2003 Federal Communications Commission hearing on media ownership held in Chicago, Illinois. The event was sponsored by the Northwestern University School of Law, and held in its Lincoln Hall. Present was F.C.C. Commissioner Michael Copps.)

“I’d like to speak about access and public broadcasting. My name is Scott Sanders. I’m here today as a member of Chicago Media Action and Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting. Thank you Commissioner Copps for your support of public hearings like this.

It is patently obvious that media consolidation is decreasing access to the public’s airwaves. The diverse voices of more, *not fewer*, licensees and free candidate time are necessary. A properly funded and restructured public broadcasting service must be part of the solution too.

Sometimes, public TV and radio are brilliant. But, Chicago public TV station WTTW was issued this warning (hold up warning) by the FCC due to its 1994 home shopping broadcasts. In the year 2000, the FCC assessed this \$2,000 fine (hold up fine) against WTTW for airing a product advertisement. This is the first fine of its kind.

We have a very serious broadcast access problem. Nine legal and regulatory challenges have been brought against public broadcasting in Chicago over the years. Commercial broadcasters inadequately serve us and our unaccountable public outlets are financially incapable of providing that which is missing.

A permanent, independent public broadcasting trust, funded by commercial broadcasting fees, is a necessary response to the ownership concentration/access problem.

Programme partnership negotiations continue between twenty-four local peace groups and WTTW. Let’s hope our efforts result in a regular live public forum series, incorporating one-hour independent documentaries that will address the concerns of working people. The bloody lies of our time, and public broadcasting’s laws and principles demand this. The FCC deregulation contemplated would soon close this door, maybe forever.

The media must, it must, detail ownership consolidation’s stealth assault on democracy. Attendance at those Clear Channel sponsored pro-war rallies may eventually become mandatory.”

Appendix 2

Press Release

APRIL 2, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY WARNS AGAINST GREATER MEDIA CONSOLIDATION

EVANSTON, IL – U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today warned: “Greater media ownership concentration limits the public’s access to diverse viewpoints.”

Schakowsky continued in a statement in support of the Midwest Public Forum on Media Ownership held at Northwestern University, “A free and open media is central to our democracy.”

Schakowsky, who is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, is adamantly opposed to any efforts to eliminate or weaken rules that would have major impact on television broadcast ownership concentrations. The Federal Communications Commission has announced that it will release a proposal on June 2nd that could possibly eliminate rules that:

- Bar NBC, ABC, CBS and FOX from merging with each other.
- The rule that limits one company from owning broadcast stations that reach more than 35% of households nationwide could disappear.
- Limit companies in the same market from owning two or more broadcast TV stations.
- Prohibit an entity from owning a local newspaper and television station in the same market.
- Cap the number of radio stations that an entity is allowed to own in a market at eight.
- Restrict a single entity from owning more than one television and radio station in the same market, unless it is proven that there is sufficient diversity in the market.

“Existing rules have been put in place to ensure that local communities have access to varying viewpoints on local issues. These rules must be maintained and should be strengthened, instead of weakened,” said Schakowsky, adding that no changes should be made without ample comment and evaluation by the public and members of Congress.

The full text of Schakowsky’s statement is below:

April 2, 2003

Representative Jan Schakowsky

Statement of Support for the Midwest Public Forum on Media Ownership

I am sorry that I cannot attend this important hearing in person because of Congressional activities in Washington, D.C., and I appreciate the opportunity to have my statement read into the record. I want to thank the Northwestern School of Law, the Media and

Entertainment Law Society of Northwestern Law, Chicago Media Watch and all those who have worked to bring the Midwest Public Forum on Media Ownership to Chicago. I am glad that Commissioner Copps is in attendance, although I wish that Chairman Powell and the other Commissioners were also here. It is important for the FCC's commissioners to hear firsthand from those affected by the decisions that the Commission will make about our media market.

The Supreme Court has maintained that the First Amendment is designed to achieve "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources." Media ownership diversity is critical to ensuring that we protect the First Amendment. Over the years, the courts have supported the belief of Congress that independent ownership of media outlets results in more diverse media voices, greater competition, and more local content.

A free and open media is central to our democracy. It promotes civic discussion, encourages public participation in policy debates, and ensures representation of ideological, cultural and geographic diversity. I cannot overstate the importance of the FCC's review of media ownership rules in deciding whether the principles of the First Amendment will be embraced in every day reality, or only in theory. Clearly, this is the most important telecommunications issue of our time.

At this very moment, the FCC is contemplating stepping in to silence those voices and limit choice. The FCC has announced that it will release a proposal on June 2nd to possibly eliminate or weaken rules that would have major impact on television broadcast ownership concentrations. The rule that bars NBC, ABC, CBS and FOX from merging with each other and the rule that limits one company from owning broadcast stations that reach more than 35% of households nationwide could disappear.

The FCC is also examining rules that apply to local markets, including the rule that limits companies in the same market from owning two or more broadcast TV stations; the rule barring an entity from owning a local newspaper and television station in the same market; the rule capping the number of radio stations that an entity is allowed to own in a market at eight; and the rule restricting a single entity from owning more than one television and radio station in the same market, unless it is proven that there is sufficient diversity in the market.

I am adamantly opposed to the FCC relaxing existing rules to allow greater media concentration. Existing rules have been put in place to ensure that local communities have access to varying viewpoints on local issues. These rules must be maintained and should be strengthened, instead of weakened. Nothing at all should be done until the public and members of Congress have a chance to evaluate and comment on any specific proposals to change the current media ownership rules. In my view, that requires ample opportunity to consider and prepare comments, as well as a sufficient number of local hearings to allow all constituencies and all parts of the nation to voice their views.

Over the last few years, we have seen considerable ownership consolidation in the media; while at the same time we have seen important public interest protections eliminated. For the

first fifty years of the 1934 Communications Act, people had a right to petition the FCC if they found coverage to be one-sided. The “fairness doctrine” required broadcasters to cover issues of public importance and to do so fairly until, in 1987, under immense pressure from the media, it was eliminated. The loss of the fairness doctrine – a major blow to consumers - - was supposed to be alleviated by a blossoming of independent, local outlets that would expand diversity by increasing competition. In other words, consumers would no longer be able to use the fairness doctrine to ensure that their views were represented on a specific media outlet but would be able to present those views through competing media in the same market. Unfortunately, the public is now faced with increased concentration – not increased competition – and no longer has the fairness doctrine to fall back on.

In the last 25 years, the number of TV station owners has declined from 540 to 460 and the number of TV newsrooms has dropped by almost 15 percent. Three-quarters of cable channels are owned by only six corporate entities, four of which are major TV networks. Seventy percent of all markets have 4 or fewer sources of original TV news production. In 1975, there were 860 owners of daily newspapers. There are less than 300 today. My constituents and many constituents across the nation are frustrated that they are unable to hear different viewpoints and, increasingly, that they are unable to get their own viewpoints to others because of barriers to the visual and print media. I believe that there is significant argument for the FCC to recommend reinstatement of the fairness doctrine. At the very least, they should not allow even more ownership concentration that makes the loss of the fairness doctrine even more onerous.

Greater media ownership concentration limits the public’s access to diverse viewpoints. Radio provides an example of what can happen when media ownership rules are abolished. In 1996, Congress eliminated the national ownership caps for radio. The result has been greater consolidation in the radio industry. In 1995, Clear Channel owned 1.3% of radio stations; today it owns 20.2%. In almost half of the largest markets, the three largest corporations control 80 percent of the radio audience. This has made it harder for diverse opinions to be heard. Just last month, Clear Channel refused to air an advertisement in which Congressman Danny Davis and I expressed our opposition to waging war in Iraq. Clear Channel refused to put the advertisement on the air. Fortunately, several independent stations did.

Clear Channel, which owns 1200 stations across the country, has refused to air songs by the Dixie Chicks who have spoken against war in Iraq, it has put out a recommended “do not play” list that includes John Lennon’s “Imagine” and 150 other songs, it has actively worked to support pro war rallies, and it has refused to play paid ads that do not reflect its own views. This is what happens when a few companies control the airwaves. The owners’ bias is reflected in what they choose to put on the air and listeners are limited in what they are able to hear.

Part of problem is that many entities that own media outlets are more focused on their bottom line than the public good and the public’s right to hear and express diverse views. The founder and CEO of Clear Channel said in a recent Fortune Magazine article, “We’re not in

the business of providing news and information. We're not in the business of providing well researched music. We're simply in the business of selling our consumers products." I appreciate Mr. Lowry's candor and I do not dispute his right to pursue profits. However, his statement clearly illustrates the problem. Greater media ownership concentration will hurt our democracy.

We must maintain media diversity and localism. We cannot allow information to be monopolized, rationed or censored because a free and open media is absolutely critical to the functions of a democratic society. The stakes are high and the threat to free speech is all too real.

The Chicago forum and others like it are a very important part of this process. Once again, I urge all the Commissioners to hold and attend more public forums across the country on any specific proposed changes to existing rules, as a major part of their decision-making process. Thank you for allowing me to have an opportunity to make a statement for today's hearing.