

The Center for Media and Democracy strengthens participatory democracy by investigating and exposing public relations spin and propaganda, and by promoting media literacy and citizen journalism. CMD provides in-depth reporting on PRWatch.org about corporate spin, government propaganda and the role of PR firms in polluting our information environment. On our SourceWatch.org site, we provide a platform for collaborative research and reporting on the individuals, organizations, and issues shaping the public agenda. Following are highlights from recent months.

The Politics and PR Of Cervical Cancer

Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson wrote a four-article series on the Politics and PR of Cervical Cancer. Many women and girls are suddenly aware that there is a virus, HPV, that can cause cervical cancer, and that there is a new vaccine on the market that protects against two of the highest-risk strains. That is no

coincidence, but rather, the carefully orchestrated result of Merck's PR. The articles outline the marketing juggernaut funded by Merck to capitalize on their fleeting corner on the market, and the extensive "education" campaign that Edelman PR designed to promote Gardasil. The articles follow the money, and how Merck has used non-profit front groups, like Women In Government, to push for mandating vaccination of middle-school aged girls. All four articles are available at www.PRWatch.org/node/6216.

Blessed Unrest: An Interview with Paul Hawken

Executive Director John Stauber interviewed author and activist Paul Hawken on his new book, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*. The book details Hawken's pivotal experiences at the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, and how he decided to chronicle and compile the organizations worldwide working broadly on a wide range of issues that Hawken describes as "the abrogation of rights, the damage to place, and the corruption of the political process by business." Hawken has begun a website at www.WiserEarth.org as a networking tool for non-profits. The interview is available at www.PRWatch.org/node/6158.

Conrad Black: Guilty

CMD Researcher Director Sheldon Rampton wrote about the conviction of Conrad Black for defrauding Hollinger International of tens of millions of dollars. Sheldon and CMD Executive Director John Stauber wrote previously about Black in their 2004 book, *Banana Republicans*. It included a section detailing how Black was a prime example of the corrupting influence of moneyed interests on journalism. Ironically, that section was too risky under British libel laws to be published in the UK edition of the book. Now that Black is a convicted felon, perhaps it is safe to call a spade a spade. The article is available at www.PRWatch.org/node/6256.

Keeping Tabs on Pro-War Front Groups

CMD has been at the forefront of uncovering the behind-the-scenes backers of front groups masquerading as citizen groups in support of the war in Iraq. Two front groups have recently stepped up their rhetoric and public presence to stem growing public discomfort with the war. On June 17, 2007, Vets for Freedom, which CMD was instrumental in uncovering over a year ago, held a press conference in the U.S. Capitol. VFF representatives and lobbyists were joined by pro-war Republicans and Senator Joe Lieberman. Details are available at www.PRWatch.org/node/6262. Another front group is Move America Forward, organized by Russo Marsh & Rogers, which has longstanding links to the Republican Party. MAF has announced that they will drive a caravan to Washington, DC, September 3-17, 2007, to lobby in favor of continued deployment of U.S. troops in Iraq. More can be found at www.PRWatch.org/node/6270.

Not in the News: Tobacco

TobaccoWiki Editor Anne Landman dug into the Legacy Tobacco Documents to see how Rupert Murdoch's ownership of Fox News affected coverage of tobacco. Murdoch has a long-term relationship with Philip Morris, including serving on their board of directors since 1989. PM subsidiary Miller Beer has sent tidy sums to Murdoch's Fox channel for advertising, and PM is clear that as a result, stories unfavorable to their cause have not been covered. Something to keep in mind as Murdoch bids to buy the Wall Street Journal. The article is available at www.PRWatch.org/node/6219.



Penn Does Double Duty

SourceWatch Editor Bob Burton examined the controversy surrounding Mark Penn. Penn is the CEO of the global PR firm Burson-Marsteller (B-M), as well as the president of the polling firm Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates. He also finds time to be a "key strategic advisor" to Senator Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. The problem is that Clinton relies heavily on strong support of the labor community, and B-M has a specialist unit that assists corporate clients to defeat union campaigns. Clinton's campaign team didn't seem bothered, and Penn assured the press that he has "strong personal sympathies with the labor movement." More at www.PRWatch.org/node/6213.



CMD In the News

• French Daily Le Monde ran a piece on its website, www.LeMonde.fr, May 21, 2007, on the U.S. practice of watchdogging the influence of money in politics and highlighted CMD's Congresspedia. Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson was quoted. "It's essential for a voter to have the most information possible about a candidate that they are prepared to vote for. If my representative, for example, had contacts with disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff, or is suspected of corruption, I have a right to know that as a voter."

• While touring Europe in conjunction with the publication of a German-language edition of *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You*, CMD Founder and Executive Director John Stauber (or Herr Stauber, as we now call him) was interviewed by both Der Spiegel and Der Standard. John was also interviewed in Brussels by the Inter Press Service News Agency on the lack of regulation of corporate lobbyists in the European Union.

• Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta was interviewed on Air America affiliate KJFK in Reno, NV, about her article on the Jessica Lynch / Pat Tillman congressional hearing and military disinformation. Her article is available at www.prwatch.org/node/6034

• Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson's four-article series on the Politics and PR of Cervical Cancer (www.PRWatch.org/node/6216) received significant media attention, including Radio Islam in Chicago, Lizz Brown's Morning Wake-Up Call program on WGNU AM in St. Louis, the Frugal Yankee on WNTN AM in Newton, MA, the Lee Rayburn show on the Mic, Madison, WI's Air America Affiliate, Madison's community radio WORT, and Pacifica affiliates WPFW (DC), KPFA (Berkeley), and WBAI (New York, NY). The entire series was also run at Alternet.org.

CMD Is Founding Member of TeleTruth Wisconsin

Cynthia Laitman, a visiting professor of Communications at Edgewood College in Madison, WI, contacted CMD in early June. A longtime supporter of CMD, Cynthia hoped that we would join her in organizing opposition to the video "competition" bill written and supported by AT&T which was poised to glide through the Wisconsin State Senate. A cursory look at the "citizens' group" TV4US that was running TV ads and delivering binders of alleged supporters to Wisconsin legislators showed astroturf at its worst. This industry-funded group was attempting to portray itself as the voice of Wisconsin citizens who wanted more cable competition, lower rates, and more union jobs — all of which the AT&T bill promised. But the claims ring hollow with even a cursory reading of the bill and AT&T's track record both in Wisconsin and in other states where similar promises were made and left unfulfilled.



Perhaps TV4US's biggest blunder was the thick binders that were delivered to each member of the Wisconsin legislature and supposedly listed constituents who supported the bill. In fact, several prominent opponents to the legislation, including TeleTruth Wisconsin organizer Cynthia Laitman and former Madison Mayor Paul Soglin, were listed in their senators' binders. In fact, State Representatives Sondy Pope-Roberts and Joe Parisi, both of whom voted against the bill, found their own names in the binders delivered to their offices. At the July 11, 2007, Teletruth Wisconsin press conference held at the Wisconsin Capitol, CMD Associate Director Judith Siers-

Poisson (left) brandished a binder covered in astroturf to illustrate how far from demonstrating real grassroots support the AT&T-backed PR stunt was.

While budget discussions have put the bill on the back burner temporarily, the fight is far from over. If you live in Wisconsin and would like to be kept apprised of TeleTruth Wisconsin's efforts, please send an email to campaign@PRWatch.org

Open Mouth, Insert Foot . . .



If Jeff Gannon's name seems familiar it's because that was the pseudonym under which James Guckert attended White House briefings as a representative of Talon News. But Gannon was actually a plant to throw the President softball questions. It was a good gig until it was revealed that he had been moonlighting as a gay male escort. Happily, Guckert/Gannon has landed on his feet as a spokesman for the International Bible Reading Association, for whom he recently organized a bible reading event on the west lawn of the White House.



The Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy will be presenting former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld with the 2007 Statesman Award at the organization's annual Churchill dinner.



Never underestimate a PR pro. Sure, flowers and candy are easy sells as Mothers Day gifts. But Vicks Baby Rub? According to a video news release (VNR) made for Proctor & Gamble, a massage with the ointment is the perfect bonding opportunity for mother and child.

Mark Your Calendar ...

For the most current information on upcoming events featuring CMD, visit www.PRWatch.org/event

- Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson will be speaking at two conferences in Malaysia in August 2007. "Media & Information Warfare: A Global Challenge in the 21st Century" is hosted by the Center for Media & Information Warfare Studies of the University Teknologi Mara (www2.uitm.edu.my/miwar2007/). Judith will be speaking on "PR Professionals and the Selling of War, Invasion and Occupation." She will present on "Media Literacy and Democracy" at the National University of Malaysia's conference, MENTION 2007 (www.ukm.my/mtn2007).

- Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta will be presenting at the "Communication and Conflict: Propaganda, Spin and Lobbying in the Global Age" conference at Strathclyde University, Glasgow, Scotland. The conference is September 7 – 9, 2007. information at: <http://gs.strath.ac.uk/content/view/240/130/>

- Research Director Sheldon Rampton will be speaking at the American Sociological Association, August 12-14, 2007. He will speak on "Propaganda, American Style: How Corporate Spin Shapes Public Opinion."

About PR Watch

PR WATCH is published by **The Center for Media and Democracy**

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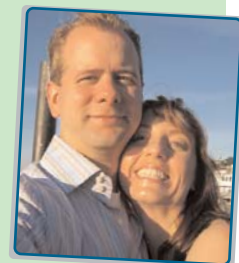


Sari Williams joined CMD as Office and Outreach Manager in January 2006. Sari facilitates the smooth day-to-day running of CMD's Madison, WI, office. Her responsibilities

include handling all incoming calls and general emails, managing our database, recording donations, and helping keep our far-flung staff of nine in good contact. Sari's friendly voice and helpful demeanor are most likely what you will encounter if you contact CMD.

Sari has bachelor's degrees in English, Graphic Design and Elementary Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is a licensed teacher for grades 1-9. Her design skills have been invaluable to CMD as we have redesigned many of our printed materials. You can see her work in the Politics and PR of Cervical Cancer graphic on page one.

She lives in Madison with her fiancé Kip and their four cats. They will be married this October. They enjoy good food, friends, movies, and dancing. Sari



is a Wisconsinite all her life, and one of her favorite destinations is her family's cabin in central Wisconsin. She thinks Madison is the best place to live in the country. "You just can't beat the lakes and the farmer's market at the Capitol!"

Show Your Support of CMD: Take Advantage of the Pension Protection Act

Often people who are age 70 1/2 or older do not need all of the mandatory IRA payout that they are required to take. As it is counted as taxable income, it is a liability if not needed for the household's bottom line.

The new Pension Protection Act provides a solution. IRA holders can choose to designate a charity such as CMD to receive all or part of the necessary payout, which helps the IRA holder avoid the tax consequences. IRA holders can elect to receive part of the payout and have a portion given directly to one or more charities. To create the designation, contact your IRA plan manager. If you would like to designate a portion to the Center for Media and Democracy, please contact Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson at judith@PRWatch.org or 608-260-9713 for any needed information. **And thank you!**

"You cannot underestimate the importance of truth-tellers in our society in an age when the truth is swept under the bed, kept in the closet, or recycled to come out as government spin and corporate propaganda."

—Journalist Bill Moyers, lauding the Center for Media and Democracy

SourceWatch Volunteer Recognized by Project Censored

CMD is very proud to announce that our indefatigable volunteer SourceWatch editor Artificial Intelligence (AI) was selected as a Project Censored Awardee for the Censored 2008 Yearbook. The yearbook is being finalized by Seven Stories Press and will be officially released nationwide on September 5th. For more information, go to www.ProjectCensored.org

AI worked extensively on the Operation FALCON article on SourceWatch, which states, “the ‘aptly-christened’ Operation FALCON — the acronym for ‘Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally’— was the ‘massive roundup of 10,000 American citizens’ in a ‘massive clandestine dragnet that involved hundreds of state, federal and local law-enforcement agencies during the week of April 4 to April 10, 2005. It was the largest criminal-sweep in the nation’s history and was [the] brainchild of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and his counterpart, Benigno Reyna, director of the United States Marshals Service [USMS] (a.k.a. Federal Marshals Service).” You can find the award-winning article by going to www.SourceWatch.org and searching for “Project FALCON”.

The quotes in the passage are from a CounterPunch article by Mike Whitney, who is a co-awardee with Artificial Intelligence

for reporting on this topic. When asked why she chose to work on this particular subject, AI referenced Mike Whitney’s work and said, “It was, in his words, ‘mind-boggling’ and just begged for attention. The more pieces that fell into place, the more questions remained, and remain, unanswered.”

When asked what receiving the award means to her, she continued, “It is a wonderful to receive recognition for my individual work that went into researching and writing this particular article. The award is also significant as it represents the exhaustive effort put forth by all SourceWatch contributors.” CMD is very appreciative of the many hours that AI and other SourceWatch volunteers have contributed over the years.

The awards will be presented at Project Censored’s Media Accountability Conference and the Real News Awards at Sonoma State University on October 26 & 27, 2007. Award winners will discuss their reporting as part of a panel, and all panels will be filmed for release on Free Speech TV. The goal of this conference is to more closely examine important stories that were sidelined by the corporate media, and to discuss strategies for getting honest and thorough information to the citizens of the country.



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