THE U.S. POWER STRUCTURE AND THE MASS MEDIA

by

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DISSERTATION
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
August 1984
DEDICATED TO

My mother and father

Ethel and Frank Morrow

My son

Michael
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Emile McAnany, whose guidance, positive feedback and gentle pressure rescued me from the pleasant purgatory of research and brought me through the hell of writing and into the heaven of completion.

Dr. Gene Burd, whose steadfast interest and helpful information led me in the right directions, and whose broad shoulders were crucial in keeping me going through some difficult times during the past eleven years.

Mike Jankowski, whose tireless efforts behind the scenes have been crucial to the success of Alternative Views and whose efforts in proofreading and reproducing this manuscript and in finding obscure bibliographical sources have been irreplaceable.

Dr. Doug Kellner, whose generosity in providing information, interpretations and encouragement have facilitated and enriched this dissertation, and whose efforts on Alternative Views have greatly contributed to the program's success.

Al Slivinske, whose input on the economic aspect of the U.S. power structure was so important, and whose early participation on Alternative Views helped establish the show's uniqueness.
Jack Schierenbeck, whose feedback and source material from a Marxian viewpoint broadened my perspective, and whose participation on Alternative Views gave the program depth.

Dr. Alfred Watkins, whose classes in the real world of government and economics provided a wealth of information.

Dr. Dan Morgan, whose class on wealth and income distribution was extremely valuable, and whose continuous encouragement for almost a decade helped sustain me.

The people of Austin Community Television, whose assistance has been vital in starting and continuing Alternative Views: Bryan Owens, Alan Bushong, Mark Zuefeldt and Paula Manley.

Dr. Tom Philpott, friend and fellow fighter for the good cause, whose help in an emergency was crucial, and whose participation on Alternative Views provided some of its most electrifying moments.

Dr. Warner Severin, whose kind, collegial words and actions helped to keep me aware of the uniqueness and importance of what I was trying to accomplish.

Dr. Rita Atwood, whose warm encouragement and sharp feedback at precisely the right time were so helpful.

Ellen Atha, whose love and friendship helped to make five years of the past decade the most enriching period of my life.
And, finally, to Robert Schenkkan, who started it all by taking a chance on a forty year old naval officer and letting him into the doctoral program in the Radio-Television-Film Department at The University of Texas at Austin.

F.S.M.

July, 1984
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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Frank Spurgeon Morrow, Jr., was born in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, May 17, 1933, the son of Frank Spurgeon Morrow and Ethel Goodfellow Morrow. Graduating in 1951 from Central High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, he entered the University of Tulsa on a full, four-year radio scholarship. While attending school he worked full time at various radio stations as announcer, disc jockey and newsperson. He also appeared in many plays, won a city oration contest, and was narrator for the Tulsa Easter Pageant. He received his B.A. in radio and speech in 1955 and worked on an M.A. in history (received in 1968). He entered the Navy in 1957 and served as a communications intelligence officer and Russian linguist for sixteen years, living and travelling in four continents. He left the Navy in 1973 to attend The University of Texas at Austin, and since then has been promoted to captain in the Naval Reserve. Since October, 1978, he has produced a weekly, sixty-minute alternative news magazine program on the public access channel of the Austin cable system. The program has received national and international notice.