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— Joel Siegel, ABC-TV

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The Media and how it sha

by Mike Gordon
Canadian University Press

"CBS News... keeping America on top of the world."

I f one of your country's leading military contractors owned one of three major television networks, you would probably be concerned over the public's access to accurate information.

Both in the U.S. and Canada, the mainstream media appears to offer diversity and competition in its presentation of 'news' to the public. But mass media is big business, and in the last 10 years, the concentration of ownership and power has fallen into fewer and fewer corporate hands.

Three television stations dominate the market in the U.S. and Canada: ABC, CBS, and NBC. In 1986, the General Electric corporation bought out RCA, the parent company of NBC. General Electric is the tenth largest corporation in the U.S. and a major military contractor, with sales from its electronic components, electrical and nuclear systems, air and spacecraft components, and insurance and banking interests exceeding \$28 billion a year.

Independent Canadian newspapers are almost but extinct. In 1970, for instance, there were 108 daily newspapers in Canada. Of these, 43 were independently owned, while 65 were owned by corporations running newspaper chains. By 1980, the number of dailies increased to 117, but only 28 were independently owned, while 89 were owned by chains. Of those 89 chain-owned papers, 65 were owned by just three firms, according to the 1970 Davey Royal Commission, and the 1981 Kent Commission.

Two newspaper chains across the country, Thompson and Southam, own and run the print media. Besides their newspaper monopoly, Thompson and Southam have diverse corporate interests. Thompson, for example,

According to Bagdikian, at the end of World War Two, more than 80 per cent of daily U.S. newspapers were independently owned, but by 1987, the number had almost reversed: 72 per cent were owned by outside corporations, 15 of which controlled most of the business. In 1981, 20 corporations controlled most of the business in the U.S.' 11,000 magazines. Five years later the number had shrunk to six.

"It is quite possible," says Bagdikian, "and serious corporate leaders predict — that by the 1990's a half dozen corporations will own all the most powerful media outlets in the U.S."

The concentration of corporate control in the media raises serious questions about the information the public is receiving. Fears about GE's influence on NBC coverage may have already been confirmed. The network recently aired a documentary on the French nuclear industry, a country that openly supports the expansion of nuclear power, and which just moved to expand its medium-range missile arsenal.

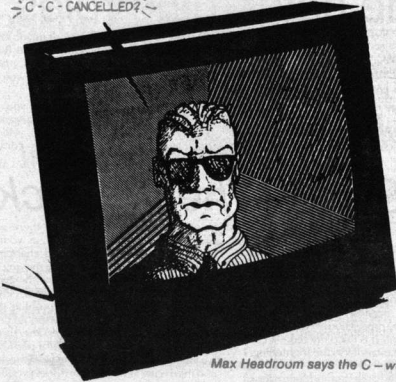
Who can ensure that a parent corporation's interest in the arms race, or banking business, won't effect the presentation of issues like nuclear weapons, in the major media outlets they control?

ABC's involvement in the 1973 coup d'état that deposed democratically-elected socialist president Salvador Allende for the current dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, is one historical answer.

ABC's negative coverage of Allende's government reflected the interests of its parent, ITT, who along with Anaconda Copper, Inc., stood to lose hundreds of millions in profits if Allende nationalized the country's communication systems and natural resources.

This brings to light what Bagdikian refers to as 'interlocking directorships' of corporations, where directors of mega-corporations,

~C-C-CANCELLED?~



Max Headroom says the C — word.

has holdings in Hudson's Bay Company, Zellers, Simpsons and interests in North Sea Oil. Southam controls several publishing companies and the largest book retailer in Canada, Coles — thus both are heavily invested in some of their own largest advertisers.

When Ben Bagdikian wrote the first edition of his book, *The Media Monopoly*, in 1983, there were 46 corporations that controlled most of the business in daily papers, magazines, television, books and motion pictures in the U.S. The number now stands at 29.

Bagdikian, dean of the University of California School of Journalism, has spent almost 10 years tracking the quickening pace of monopoly control of the major media. He released the latest edition last November.

sit on several boards at a time, extending their stake in the media coverage of the companies they represent.

"Time Inc. has so many interlocks," he writes, "they almost represent a plenary board of directors of U.S. business and finance, including Mobil Oil, AT&T, American Express, Firestone Tire and Rubber Co., Mellon National Corporation, Atlantic Richfield, Xerox, General Dynamics, and most of the international banks."

The Progressive Conservative party, however, has found a way of avoiding the potential conflict-of-interest situations of large corporate media-owners.

For a fee, a private Ottawa firm, Parliamentary News Service, will package taped