



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on January 24, 2011

## **NPR: Entertaining Our Way to Socialism**

Actually, the idea for the legislation came from a 1967 report from the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television entitled “Public Television: A Program for Action.” The commission included such high-powered members as James B. Conant, former president of Harvard; author Ralph Ellison; Leonard Woodstock, vice president of the United Automobile Workers of America; James R. Killian, Jr., chairman of MIT; Terry Sanford, former Governor of North Carolina; Lee A. DuBridg, president of the California Institute of Technology; and others of similar notability. Indeed, congressional action was swift, and before one knew it, the Carnegie report had become federal law.



It’s important to understand the political context in which all of this took place. Barry Goldwater, a conservative Senator from Arizona, had sparked the emergence of a national libertarian-conservative movement. His rival for the presidential nomination in the Republican Party was liberal, functionally illiterate Nelson Rockefeller. At the nominating convention in San Francisco, Rockefeller was booed, and Goldwater triumphed. While it had been previously expected that the Republican candidate would run against John F. Kennedy, the assassination of the President in Dallas on November 22, 1963, changed everything.

Kennedy had lost a lot of his popularity because of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and it was predicted by many that he would lose the election for a second term. That’s when Barry Goldwater was able to mobilize conservatives in what was hoped would be a great return to conservative Republican principles. But when Vice President Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency after the assassination, the odds for a Republican victory decreased.

Though Goldwater had rejected the legacy of the New Deal, he lost the 1964 election by one of the largest landslides in history, bringing down many Republican candidates as well — thanks mainly to Nelson Rockefeller and other members of the American establishment. Rockefeller power had brought the entire media down on Goldwater. And the Johnson campaign painted him as a reactionary, ready to unleash the atom bomb on North Vietnam.

The defeat of the conservatives gave Johnson and the Democrats in Congress all the votes needed to pass their Great Society programs, which included the Civil Rights Act, Food Stamp Act, Economic Opportunity Act, Voting Rights Act, Immigration Act (which liberalized immigration policy and quadrupled the number of first-generation immigrants living in the United States from 9.6 million in 1970 to about 38 million in 2007), Elementary and Secondary Education Act (which opened wide the federal treasury for the benefit of public educators), War on Poverty, Medicare and Medicaid, Gun Control Act of 1968, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, and



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National Public Radio.

Nothing in the U.S. Constitution gives the federal government the power to expand its jurisdiction over the cultural and educational activities of the American people. Yet, when the Republicans under Nixon regained control of the White House, nothing was done to repeal or undo any of the Great Society acts that had created this massive federal intrusion in culture and education.

## **A New Institution**

It was the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 that set up the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and in 1970 National Public Radio. When President Johnson signed the act into law on November 7, 1967, he said:

It announces to the world that our Nation wants more than just material wealth; our Nation wants more than a "chicken in every pot." We in America have an appetite for excellence, too. While we work every day to produce new goods and to create new wealth, we want most of all to enrich man's spirit. That is the purpose of this act....

It will get part of its support from our Government. But it will be carefully guarded from Government or from party control. It will be free, and it will be independent — and it will belong to all of our people.

Actually, the true purpose of the act was to use federal funds to jump-start a liberal non-commercial radio system to promote the statist agenda of the Left under the guise of enriching "man's spirit."

Johnson added: "It will give a wider and, I think, stronger voice to educational radio and television by providing new funds for broadcast facilities. It will launch a major study of television's use in the Nation's classrooms and their potential use throughout the world."

Johnson opened the first official meeting of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Board on April 26, 1968, in the White House Cabinet Room. According to the act, the President appoints the nine members of the CPB's board of directors. The act states that board members shall be selected "from among citizens of the United States who are eminent in such fields as education, cultural and civic affairs, or the arts, including radio and television; and shall be selected so as to provide as nearly as practicable a broad representation of various regions of the Nation, various professions and occupations, and various kinds of talent and experience appropriate to the functions and responsibilities of the Corporation."

Thus, by an act of a very liberal Congress, a public-private broadcasting system was created in the interest, supposedly, of enriching education. Its aim was to supplement and bolster the education system's progressive agenda with radio facilities to give the progressives even broader reach.

NPR's first board of directors was chaired by Bernard Mayes, an Anglican-Catholic worker-priest and BBC journalist who had been invited to the United States in 1958 to become director of a student house attached to Judson Memorial Church in New York's Greenwich Village. He continued to do interviews for the BBC from the United States. In 1960, he moved to San Francisco, where he became the BBC's West Coast correspondent and also worked at a mission. Mayes then founded San Francisco Suicide Prevention, which was later used as a model throughout the United States. An avowed homosexual, Mayes also organized a sexuality study center, called the Parsonage, for the Episcopal Diocese of California.

## **Out of the Closet**

In the fall of 1968, Mayes was invited by the Ford Foundation to attend a private meeting in Suffern,



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New York, to discuss American radio and television. Actually, it was Frank Gillard, director of BBC's radio networks, who had gotten Mayes invited to the meeting. Mayes was told about the Public Broadcasting Act and how it would change broadcasting in the United States. There was talk of using the BBC as a source of quality programs for the new public network. At the meeting was Jim Day, president of KQED, who later offered Mayes the radio station. And so, in 1968, Mayes became the founder of KQED-FM and executive vice president of KQED TV in San Francisco. From that vantage point, he helped organize the public broadcasting system and in 1970 became the first working chairman of the newly formed NPR.

The question is, who selected Bernard Mayes, a "gay" British worker-priest and BBC journalist, to become the first chairman? He was chosen by the board of directors, which held its first meeting on June 22-23, 1970, in Sausalito, California. Among the board members were Frank Gillard of BBC, Albert Hulsen of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, Richard Estell of the University of Michigan's educational radio, Karl Schmidt of the University of Wisconsin's educational radio, and several others. But probably the most talented among them was Wisconsin-born William Siemering, who wrote NPR's Statement of Purpose, created the famous radio program *All Things Considered*, won a MacArthur Foundation genius grant, and became senior radio advisor to George Soros's Open Society Institute. At the close of the meeting, it was Karl Schmidt who had the board pass a resolution stating that NPR recognize itself as "an instrument for social change."

In 1984, Mayes was invited to join the English faculty at the University of Virginia, and in 1991 was appointed assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences where he founded the Program for Media Studies. In 1991, he co-founded the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual Faculty, Staff and Graduate Student Association at the university, known as UVa Pride. His autobiography, *Escaping God's Closet*, published after his retirement in 1999, earned him the national Lambda award for religion and spirituality. According to Lambda's website, its purpose is "to empower, reduce homophobia, and expand understanding of sexual orientation and related issues by working with GLBT and allied organizations and individuals."

Considering who was NPR's first chairman of the board, it is not surprising that NPR has been sympathetic to the "gay" rights movement since its inception. Nor is it surprising that it has consistently served as a mouthpiece for statist solutions and progressive-liberal causes, considering its connections to government. Of course, NPR and its defenders claim they have no agenda but excellence in broadcasting, but it is obvious to any conservative that they tend to represent the views of the liberal elite.

Since its founding, the influence of NPR has grown greatly. As a privately and publicly funded tax-exempt membership organization, it serves as a national syndicator to 797 public radio stations across America. It produces and distributes news and cultural programming for the entire system. Most public radio stations broadcast a mixture of NPR programs, plus content from other providers: American Public Media, Public Radio International (in cooperation with BBC), and Public Radio Exchange, as well as programs produced locally. NPR also manages the Public Radio Satellite System.

### **Token Conservatives**

NPR's most listened to programs are its drive-time news program, *Morning Edition*, and in the afternoon, *All Things Considered*. Anyone who has listened to these programs over the years clearly recognizes their liberal slant. Indeed, most of NPR's staff are life-long liberals with a leftist worldview. Yet, their television stations do carry such shows as *The McLaughlin Group*, a weekly review with both



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liberal and conservative panelists. And for years, the late Louis Rukeyser conducted *Wall Street Week*, a pro-capitalist show for investors, on public TV stations.

And, of course, William F. Buckley's famous *Firing Line* was normally seen on public television stations. Yet the "conservative" alternative Buckley brought to NPR programming was not conservatism as it had traditionally been understood, but a neo-conservatism that (for instance) supported foreign interventionism as opposed to a mind-our-own-business foreign policy.

In 1979, the Carnegie group issued a second critical report on public radio and TV. It said, "We find public broadcasting's financial, organizational and creative structure fundamentally flawed. There is little likelihood that public television and radio might consistently achieve programming excellence under the present circumstances." Indeed, President Johnson, in his memoirs, offered a similar critique. He wrote: "Considering that the thrust of the Great Society in general was toward the poor and minorities, it is worth saying that the emphasis in public broadcasting turned out to be toward an elite audience."

### **Rising Revenues**

As for funding, during the 1970s and early 1980s, most of NPR's finances came from the federal government. Steps were taken during the 1980s to completely wean NPR from government support. Indeed, a funding crisis in 1983 forced the network to turn to private listeners, foundations, and corporations for financial support.

In 2009, NPR revenues totaled \$164 million, with most of the money coming from programming fees, grants, contributions, and sponsorships. According to its 2009 financial statement, about 40 percent of NPR revenues came from the fees it charged member stations to receive programming. Member stations get 6 percent of their funds from local governments and 10 percent of their revenues from the federal government through CPB grants. They also raise funds through their periodic pledge drives, corporate underwriting, and grants from state governments and universities.

In 2009, NPR's endowment was \$258 million. About \$34 million of it is owed to the fact that on November 6, 2003, NPR was given over \$225 million from the estate of the late Joan B. Kroc, third wife of Ray Kroc, founder of the McDonald's hamburger empire. This was the largest monetary gift ever given to a cultural institution. Kroc also actively favored nuclear disarmament, which led Cal Thomas, the conservative columnist, to call her a "McNut."

In 2003, the annual budget of NPR was \$101 million. In 2004, that budget increased by over 50 percent to \$153 million due to the Kroc gift. NPR's 2005 budget was about \$120 million.

In October 2010, NPR accepted a \$1.8 million grant from George Soros through his Open Society Foundations. The purpose of the grant is to add at least 100 journalists at NPR member radio stations in all 50 states over the next three years in a project called Impact of Government. Their goal is to counter the strong influence that Fox News and conservative commentators like Bill O'Reilly and Glenn Beck are having on the American public.

### **The Juan Williams Affair**

Which brings us to the firing of Juan Williams, who had worked for NPR as a journalist for 10 years. He was summarily fired for having made a rather innocuous comment about his uneasy feelings when seeing fellow passengers at the airport in Muslim garb, affirming their Muslim faith. He revealed his feelings in the context of a discussion on the conflict over the building of a mosque near Ground Zero.



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The comment was hardly worth getting excited about. But NPR's senior vice president for news, Ellen Weiss, was so offended that she summarily fired Williams. Later NPR's president Vivian Schiller implied that Williams might have a mental problem that only he and his psychiatrist could deal with. Of course, to a progressive, all conservatives need psychiatric treatment. Under communism in Russia, dissidents were put in psychiatric hospitals and drugged because it was believed that anti-communism was a serious mental illness.

Interestingly enough, Schiller knows a lot about communist Russia. At Cornell University she got a Bachelor's degree in Russian and Soviet studies, and at Middlebury College, she earned a Master's degree in Russian. Prior to becoming president of NPR, Schiller was general manager of the *New York Times* website, and prior to that she was a senior vice president at CNN, competitor to the conservative Fox News.

Williams was also guilty of appearing as a regular panelist on Fox's Sunday News program. His role was to provide a "liberal" counterpoint to the viewpoints expressed by Brit Hume and other panelists. Does Schiller still harbor a deep resentment against Fox, her former competitor? And do NPR liberals resent the fact that Williams wrote in favor of Clarence Thomas being nominated to the Supreme Court?

Another NPR journalist who has appeared regularly on this Fox panel is Mara Liasson, one of the purest journalists in the media. I have never heard her utter a single biased opinion about anything. She is extremely effective as a reporter. So far, she has not been fired, but it is assumed that her participation in a Fox News program does not sit well with Schiller, who no doubt believes that NPR's mission is to provide progressives with an undiluted opportunity to get their message out to the American public.

### **Nina and Anita**

One of the sacred cows of NPR is Nina Totenberg, who comments on legal matters, and in particular on Supreme Court nominations and confirmation hearings. She achieved considerable notoriety when she broke the story of Anita Hill's charges of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas in one of the most controversial and dramatic hearings ever to be seen on television.

Lisa A. Phillips writes in her book *Public Radio*: "Totenberg discovered, through sources she told me she would never reveal, that the envelopes [which she saw being delivered to committee members] contained an affidavit by Anita Hill, a University of Oklahoma law professor, that alleged that Thomas had sexually harassed her while she was working for him at the U.S. Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the early 1980s."

Totenberg was never criticized by NPR for being an accomplice in the attempted destruction of Clarence Thomas's reputation and potential career as a Supreme Court justice. Apparently, because of NPR's liberal bias, there was never any thought of firing Nina Totenberg for her active role in a highly politicized event.

### **Defunding the NPR**

Williams' firing has confirmed just how strong NPR's liberal bias actually is, and it has spurred calls for government defunding of NPR. But defunding does not necessarily mean the end of NPR. Because public television has become so dependent on popular support, NPR has created programs that the average American enjoys, such as Rick Steve's travel shows, Wayne Dyer's motivational shows, *Antiques Roadshow*, and some of the musical programs that appeal to a variety of ethnic groups. Thus, there is little likelihood that there will ever be a popular demand to close down public TV.



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But why should American taxpayers be forced to support a progressive communications conglomerate, regardless of whether or not it offers some programming the public likes? With supporters like the late Joan Kroc and the leftist billionaire George Soros, why should NPR receive *any* taxpayer money? The NPR communications empire should be able to stand on its own two feet by now. But even if it cannot, taxpayers should not be forced to prop it up, just as taxpayers should not be forced to prop up any other business that is rejected by the marketplace.



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