



What a Government-funded "Public" Media Would Look and Sound Like

One of the most outspoken advocates on behalf of a Big Government-Big Media merger is avowed socialist Robert McChesney, the Gutgsell Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the President and co-founder of Free Press, a national organization pushing an agenda that includes media reform "solutions" that advocate Big Media bailouts and government-funded public-private partnerships. Professor McChesney also hosts the "Media Matters" weekly radio program every Sunday afternoon on WILL-AM, a "public" radio station that receives about 60 percent of its funding from the federal and state governments and liberal-left tax-exempt foundations.



McChesney's most recent "Media Matters" program for Sunday, September 26, featured an extended [interview with U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders](#) of Vermont, the only currently-serving member of Congress who [publicly identifies himself as a socialist](#). Sanders is listed as an Independent on the ballot but caucuses with the Democrats and is considered a Democrat for committee assignments.

In his glowing introduction to Sanders, McChesney described the senator as "one of the most prominent politicians in the United States today, and whatever one's political view, anyone who knows him understands him as a person of great public and personal integrity and considerable intelligence." Throughout his hour on the program, Senator Sanders inveighed repeatedly against the power of Wall Street, big banks, and big corporations, and especially thrashed Republicans for not "standing up to big money interests" and not being "willing to take on Wall Street."

"Speaking Truth to Power"?

Although there was ample opportunity, neither Professor McChesney nor any of his callers bothered to ask Senator Sanders about his own recent, spectacular failure to stand up to the big money interests of Wall Street. Sanders provided the strategic flip-flop in the Senate that torpedoed the nearly successful heroic effort by Rep. Ron Paul (T-Texas) to obtain an historic audit of the Federal Reserve. We reported here in May (["Time to Audit the Fed"](#)) on Sanders' remarkable reversal:

The timing of the sellout by Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) could not have been more politically auspicious — or more suspicious. For months the Senator had been denouncing the secrecy of the Federal Reserve's bailout operations, which have exceeded two trillion dollars. For months he had been pledging that he would push for a genuine audit of the Fed. He authored an amendment in the Senate identical to "Audit the Fed" legislation in the House (H.R. 1207) authored by



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Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas).

However, on May 6 Sanders caved in to pressures from the Obama administration, the Federal Reserve, and Wall Street. The "who-how-why" details behind the flip-flop are still largely unknown, but here is the "what" of the matter: In a last-minute switch, Sanders agreed to substitute a watered-down version of the audit as an amendment to financial reform legislation sponsored by Senate Banking Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.).

The new Sanders amendment would provide the administration, the Fed, and Members of Congress with a certain level of cover, allowing them to claim that they had supported auditing the Fed, while at the same time allowing the Fed to continue most of its operations in secret, beyond the scrutiny of Congress and the public...

A favorite meme of the political left is "speaking truth to power," which is meant to invoke the image of fearless Davids taking on entrenched Goliaths, armed solely with the power of truth. It is a slogan McChesney is wont to employ, as for instance, in his October 30, 2009 *Washington Post* op-ed, ["Yes, journalists deserve subsidies too."](#)

Sen. Bernie Sanders is forever talking about transparency and accountability, but when he had the greatest opportunity of his career to "speak truth to power" and to force real transparency and accountability on the Fed and its privileged coterie of private banks that have looted trillions of dollars from the American economy, he joined the looters. McChesney not only failed to call Sanders out on this critical betrayal but gave further cover to Sanders' false populist posing by giving verbal support to Sanders' proposal to use federal anti-trust actions to break up the power of the four big commercial banks (Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, and JP Morgan Chase).

However, it is the Federal Reserve that has brought about this centralization, concentration, and cartelization of commercial banking power that McChesney and Sanders claim to abhor. Yet, neither of them is willing to take on this power. That may be because they know the Federal Reserve, as a key Marxist institution, is essential to the establishment and maintenance of a socialist state. As a socialist and a man of "considerable intelligence" (according to McChesney), Senator Sanders is, no doubt, aware that a national central bank like the Fed is prescribed by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. In that celebrated blueprint for socialism, Marx and Engels provide a ten-point program to consummate "the Communist revolution." Number five in that program is:

Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

And following immediately after that is the Marx-Engels prescription for state control of the media. Point number six in the *Manifesto's* program calls for:

Centralization of the means of communications and transport in the hands of the State.

Centralization of the control of the media in the hands of the State is precisely what McChesney and co-author John Nichols are calling for in their many media appearances promoting their new book, *Saving Journalism: The Soul of Democracy*.

We must "remove brick by brick the capitalist system itself"

McChesney and Nichols are socialists who completely embrace the Marx-Engels prescription for centralization and state control over all areas of society. However, when they appear on so-called mainstream media programs, they can count on interviewers — fellow "progressives" — not to mention



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their hard-Left credentials or their past statements that might inform and alarm the intended audience.

McChesney is a former editor for *Monthly Review*, which describes itself as radical socialist and Marxist. In a December 21, 2008 essay for *Monthly Review* entitled "[A New New Deal Under Obama?](#)", which he co-wrote with John Bellamy Foster, McChesney proclaimed:

Only a reform movement so radical that it would appear revolutionary within the context of the existing U.S. economic and social order, fundamentally reducing the field of operation of the capitalist market, holds any chance of substantially improving the conditions of most people in society.

But, just to make sure the journal's socialist audience didn't miss the message, McChesney and Foster spelled it out explicitly:

These gains will only be made through an enormous class struggle from below. If won, they will not, we underscore, eliminate the evils of capitalism, or the dangers it poses for the world and its people. In the end, there is no real answer but to remove brick by brick the capitalist system itself, rebuilding the entire society on socialist principles.... In the meantime, it is time to begin to organize a revolt against the ruling class-imposed ceiling on civilian government spending and social welfare in U.S. society.

McChesney and Nichols (Washington correspondent for *The Nation*) have co-authored a number of articles (and each has written individually) for the radical Marxist journal *In These Times*. Its founder and editor, James Weinstein, wrote that he was intending to develop "a sustained mass movement for socialism" in the spirit of the "old Socialist movement of 1900-19, the Communist movement inspired by the example of the Russian Revolution, and the 'New Left'" of the 1960s. Was any of this brought up when McChesney and Nichols were prominently featured on PBS's NOW program, "[Saving American Journalism](#)"? To the contrary, NOW's host David Brancaccio introduced the duo as "two media scholars" and bent over backwards to dismiss all notions that their proposals presented any threat to the freedom of the press. Indeed, Brancaccio made it easy for the authors to claim the mantle of the Founding Fathers, and for Nichols to assert that his socialist proposals "are as American as apple pie."

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Photo: Robert McChesney, a professor of communication at the University of Illinois and co-founder of the Free Press media-reform Web Site, poses at his home in Urbana, Ill., April 29, 2004.: AP Images



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