




PBS Home
Search
Programs A-Z
TV Schedules
Shop
Membershi

NOW

WITH BILL MOYERS

Home

Politics & Economy

Science & Health

Arts & Culture

Society & Community

- Discussion
- TV Schedule
- The Series

SEARCH: [Find](#)



In Depth - Transcript 10.25.02

Transcript: [Bill Moyers Journal](#)

◀ [Return to Massive Media Facts and Figures](#)

Transcript 

BILL MOYERS: The FCC was established in 1934 to see that the nation's broadcasters served the public interest — making sure the airwaves were used for more than commercial purposes alone.

HISTORICAL TAPE: "The item is adopted..."

MOYERS: Things have changed over the years. Just listen to FCC Chairman Michael Powell.

FCC CHAIRMAN MICHAEL POWELL (FROM TAPE): This is the most unique period in the history of the Federal Communications Commission. Every single area that we have regulatory oversight for is in the midst of its most profound revolution ever."

MOYERS: That revolution has brought new technologies, like the Internet, cable and satellite television. But it has also brought on the greatest concentration of media owners in American history.

Now the FCC is considering dismantling the last rules that would prevent even more consolidation. That's exactly what media giants have been lobbying for...in the name of economic efficiency.

SHAUN SHEEHAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE TRIBUNE COMPANY: In Chicago, we have 650 people on the editorial staff. In LA, in Los Angeles for the LA Times, it's well over 1,000.

MOYERS: Shaun Sheehan is Vice President of the Tribune Company, one of the country's largest broadcasters and newspaper publishers. The Tribune is pushing for an end to the rule that prevents a company from owning a newspaper and a television station in the same market.

SHEEHAN: If you take that reportorial talent and put it to use on television, Internet, what you have you, get the words out over multiple platforms, you better serve your audience.

MICHAEL COPPS, FCC COMMISSIONER: If you take this to its logical conclusion, you could end up with a situation where one company owns the newspaper, the television station, the radio station and the cable system.

MOYERS: Michael Copps is the lone Democrat on the FCC.

COPPS: That may have some economic efficiencies attached to it, but I daresay it also has some profound democratic and social and political considerations that we ignore only at our own tremendous peril.

MOYERS: But consolidation is the trend. In 1975 there were some 1500 owners of full-power TV stations and daily newspapers. By 2000, that number had dropped to about 62

And remember the Telecommunications Act of 1996? It led to a wave of mergers. There are now 1,700 fewer owners of commercial radio stations — a one-third decline. Today, just a few players dominate. One conglomerate alone - Clear Channel - owns more than 1,200 stations and controls 11 percent of the market.

and by the way - that legislation was also supposed to lower the rates you pay for your cable service. Instead, costs have increased almost 30 percent. Why? Because the big giveaway in '96 did not increase competition - it increased monopoly. The nation's seven largest cable operators control more than 75 percent of the market.

Yes, it's true: the typical cable consumer today receives about 60 channels. But those so-called "choices" are determined by a handful of corporate giants ... companies like Viacom, AOL-Time Warner, Disney, and News Corp.

But do we hear about all this from the mainstream media? Hardly.

Of the major broadcasters, only abc reported the FCC's recent decision to review media ownership rules ... and that report was at 4:40 in the morning. While the big newspapers do somewhat better, only the LOS ANGELES TIMES mentioned that its corporate owner, the Tribune Company, was actively lobbying for deregulation.

GENE KIMMELMAN, CONSUMERS UNION: Those broadcasters and newspapers are what we rely upon to tell that story and allow the American people to have that public debate. They don't want to have that debate. They want a deregulatory minded administration just get out of their way, eliminate ownership limitations, let them join together. And the American people unfortunately may find out about this on the back end after it's all happened.

MOYERS: And while the public's been left unaware of what's happening, time is running. The FCC has set a December 2nd deadline for public comments on the proposed changes.

Commissioner Copps wants more debate and more time for it:

COPPS: I think we need to go out across the country and talk to all of the stakeholders in the great American communications revolution of our time. And in point of fact, every American is a stakeholder.

[Newsletter](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Classroom](#)

© Public Affairs Television. All rights reserved.