

Progressive News Services:

Spreading the Word Building the Movement

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*A popular
government
without popular
information, or the
means of
acquiring it, is but
a prologue to a
farce or a tragedy,
or perhaps both.*

James Madison

We've been told for quite some time that U.S. economic security rests on the back of consumer spending. In the wake of the September 11th tragedies, the U.S. media played a familiar tune — “Just keep the economic engines running!” General Motors (a leading exporter of jobs for decades) launched its flag-waving ad campaign with no payments for a year; auto sales soared and presto... “consumer confidence is back up,” according to the headlines. The message: it's not only patriotic but safe to keep buying. The media is less willing to examine the fact that many people in the richest nation on earth are sliding further into poverty.

Our dominant brand of media is not a conspiracy, nor is it an accident. It's the result of conventional business strategies combined with a loosening of regulations that are supposed to prevent monopolies. Currently fewer than ten major corporations dominate the US media and control the information in magazines, newspapers, television, radio and the internet (see graph).

As the need for civic journalism grows, some states in the West have found a new voice to examine social, economic, community and environmental issues from a progressive perspective. Washington is one of eight states where non-profits are

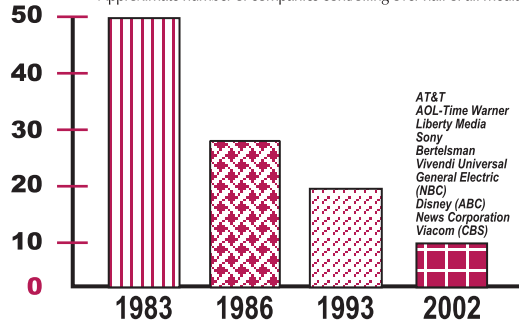
supporting an independent news service providing fully produced, top quality news stories to radio news

stations (and television stations in Idaho) that reach people on a daily basis through mainstream local media.

“Sharpening peoples’ understanding of a ‘living wage movement’ depends on translating stories and organizing struggles into the news,” according to

Increased Concentration of Media Ownership

Approximate number of companies controlling over half of all media



source: Ben Bagdikian and Eric Boehlert, Salon: The Nation

John Boonstra, executive director of the Washington Association of Churches. “The *Washington News Service* not only exposes the powers behind the forces of economic injustice, but reveals the organizational movements seeking to confront poverty.”

Creative Communications pioneered the use of statewide news services concentrating on the issues of progressive non-profits. The *Northern Rockies News Service* started in Idaho in 1996, followed by similar services in Washington, North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Oregon, Iowa and Montana. While groups working with the Ford Foundation's *Collaborations That Count* play a key role in Northwest states, overall more than 185 non-profits are now participating in the services.

Last year, more than 1,500 stories generated by progressive news services ran more than 41,000 times on 825 stations across the network. But numbers don't tell the whole story. Within each state, and across the region, the news services have created a basis for enhanced cooperation, new alliances and media relationships, cross-fertilization of issues, and the opportunity to emphasize core messages. This work is particularly important as the progressive movement painstakingly articulates what it takes to create real economic and national security.



Creative Communications welcomes new partners in additional states, and will be starting a Spanish broadcast service in the Northwest and a print pilot in Washington. For more information, contact Lark Corbeil at (208) 342.8213 or lark@rmci.net.



credit: Creative Communications

Media activists and organizers at regional News Service strategy session: Skip Wood, Creative Communications; Brigitte Sarabi, Western Prison Project; John Nichols, *The Nation*; Dondrea Warner, Oregon News Service.