

# The Plan for the \$50 Billion New Socialist Media

By Cliff Kincaid

Robert W. McChesney, the socialist professor whose Free Press organization is leading the charge for the \$50 billion transformation of the media, hosts a one-sided, tax-supported radio program sponsored by the University of Illinois that could serve as a model for the “New Public Media” the group has envisioned for America.

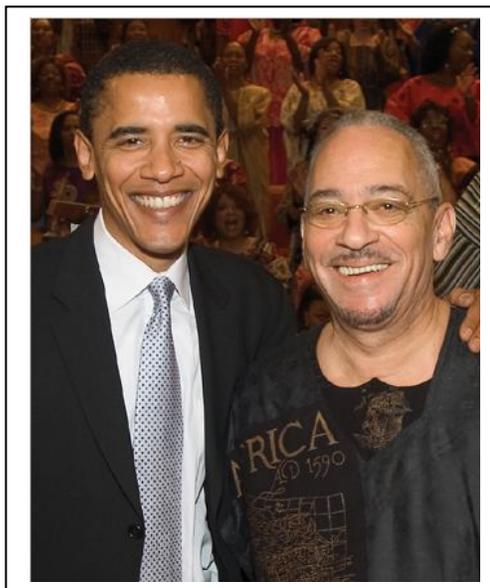
**McChesney recently introduced Obama’s anti-American pastor Jeremiah Wright at a celebration of the socialist publication Monthly Review. Wright praised Marxism and called America “land of the greed and home of the slave.”**

McChesney’s organization, the Free Press, has led the campaign for what it calls “New Public Media.” McChesney’s “Media Matters” show on WILL radio AM 580 in Urbana, Illinois, may be the model for what Free Press has in mind. The Sunday show is an examination of politics and media issues from a hard-left perspective and serves as a personal propaganda vehicle for McChesney’s favorite political causes and candidates.

In response to an inquiry, McChesney couldn’t name one conservative who has been on his show since it was launched in 2002.

“There is no shortage of ‘conservative’ talk available to listeners in our community,” he told us, presumably referring to other stations. “There are precious few programs anywhere on the dial that feature many of the guests we have.”

This may indeed be true. A review of the archives of the McChesney radio show finds interviews with a steady stream of left-wing activists, many of them from the “media reform” movement that McChesney has dedicated much of his academic life to creating and nurturing. These include John Nichols, Ben Scott, Josh Silver, Derek Turner, and Craig Aaron from Free Press, which McChesney co-founded in 2002. (McChesney is still on the Free Press board). Interestingly, Scott was one of McChesney’s students and helped produce his radio show before going to work for then-Rep. Bernie Sanders, a self-declared socialist, and then becoming director of policy for Free Press.



McChesney has provided a platform for representatives of the left-wing media watchdog organization that also calls itself Media Matters. Topics have included “How hate talk radicalized the American right,” “How the press rolled over for Bush,” and “What liberal media?” The entire thrust of the program is that the media are too conservative and too “capitalist.”

McChesney has also interviewed FCC commissioner Michael Copps a number of times on his show. Copps appeared at the 2008 Free Press conference and used the Obama campaign slogan, "Yes, we can," as he urged the thousands of "progressives" in the audience to elect Barack Obama and bring "change" to Washington, D.C.

### **No Fairness or Balance Here**

The one-sided nature of the show is ironic since the Free Press regularly attacks Fox News for not being truly “fair and balanced.” Indeed, when one of its former board members, Van Jones, was being exposed on Fox News for his communist views and background, Free Press said this “visionary and principled” leader was the target of a “smear campaign.” Later, after Jones was ousted from his White House job, Craig Aaron of Free Press called Glenn Beck, who had been exposing Jones, an agent of “fear and misinformation,” without explaining what facts about Jones had been misrepresented.

WILL Radio AM 580, affiliated with National Public Radio and sponsored by the University of Illinois, received \$1.2 million from the University of Illinois and almost \$1.6 million in federal grants, including from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), in 2008.

Under the law, 47 U.S. Code, Section 396(g)(1)(A), programs funded by the CPB are supposed to be objective and balanced. But McChesney openly flouts the law and does not even seem to be familiar with the legal obligations that are supposed to apply to his show and others.

McChesney said that his program “is very popular in our community” and that, “The free market has spoken.” But his show is not dependent on the free market. Rather, it is supported by tax dollars and on-air fundraisers hosted by McChesney and guests such as Noam Chomsky of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, a Communist Party spin-off.

### **New Socialist Media**

While the McChesney show has a very small listening audience, its format and themes may give us some insight into the kind of “new media” we could expect from passage of the \$50 billion “Public Media Trust Fund,” a Free Press proposal which is supposed to be financed by a tax on home electronic devices. This would be on top of the \$8 billion

from taxpayers that has been provided to the CPB for public TV and radio since 1967. (The CPB currently receives about \$400 million a year.)

In addition to these expenditures, \$7.2 billion under the Obama federal “stimulus” plan has already been allocated toward development of a national broadband Internet plan, and that some of the funds could be diverted into the coffers of “progressive” groups dedicated to McChesney-style “media reform.”

A professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, McChesney has said that “media reform” should be part of the march toward socialism in America and that capitalism has to be dismantled “brick by brick.” Van Jones, the ousted communist “Green Jobs Czar” of the Obama Administration, served on the Free Press board with McChesney in 2007 and 2008.

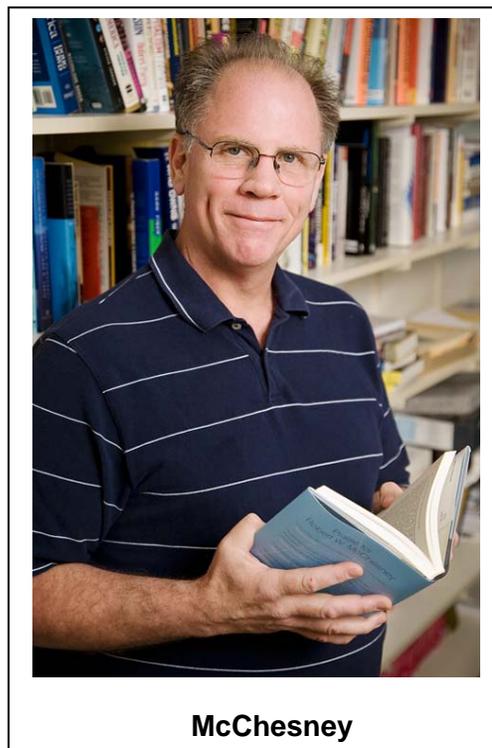
Despite its socialist orientation, Free Press is financially supported by extremely wealthy individuals such as George Soros, the leftist billionaire, and Marcy Carsey, one of the creators of The Cosby Show whose net worth has been estimated at \$600 million. Carsey serves on the Free Press board and was a top Obama inauguration donor, having contributed \$50,000 to the event.

### **Where is the Balance?**

Jay Pearce, director of creative content of WILL Radio at the University of Illinois and executive producer of McChesney’s radio show, declared, “That’s a good question,” when asked why the radical “media scholar” fails to include interviews with any identifiable conservatives on the air.

Mark Leonard, general manager of WILL, said, “It doesn’t concern me,” when asked about the complete lack of conservative guests. “What we celebrate is a diversity of points of view,” he said, although he couldn’t name one conservative on the air on WILL. He said he assumes that conservatives sometimes call into the “Media Matters” program, and that was good enough for him.

The biased programming contradicts the purposes of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, which created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and requires objectivity and balance in programs funded by the CPB. “From its advent more than four decades ago, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting has had a legal mandate to ensure ‘strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature,’” the CPB says. “This principle is part of the bedrock of public



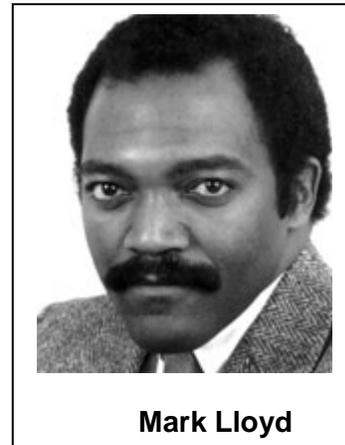
**McChesney**

broadcasting in America, a country built upon a foundation of lively and open political and social discourse.”

These descriptions of some of his recent shows and guests provide an illustration of the one-sided news and information that he regularly puts on the air:

- Wendell Potter speaks out on “the need for a fundamental overhaul of the American health care system...”
- Glenn Greenwald “examines the manipulative electoral tactics used by the GOP and propagated by the establishment press.”
- John Wilson, author of “President Barack Obama: A More Perfect Union.”
- Robb Weissman examines “the activities of multinational companies.”
- Kevin Phillips talks about his book on “the global crisis of American capitalism.”
- Greg Mitchell, author of “Why Obama Won.”
- Matthew Rothschild, editor of The Progressive magazine, “which is one of the leading voices for peace and social justice in this country.”

Interestingly, on February 18, 2007, McChesney interviewed Mark Lloyd, now the FCC chief diversity officer who was then a fellow at the Soros-funded Center for American Progress. He urged more federal involvement in telecommunications policy, including more tax dollars for a “fully-funded” public broadcasting. McChesney said Lloyd was so informative that he should be a “permanent guest.” Lloyd returned the favor, saying, “Much of what I learned about public broadcasting, early years, came from reading you Bob.”



### **The Partisan Political Agenda**

While he postures as a “media scholar,” McChesney is himself a political and partisan activist, as demonstrated in Federal Election Commission (FEC) records. These disclose thousands of dollars in financial contributions from McChesney to political candidates, all of them Democrats except for one Green Party nominee in Illinois, a retired visiting professor at the University of Illinois by the name of Carl Estabrook who was known for his far-left perspective on the Middle East.

McChesney used his radio show back in 2002 to promote Estabrook, who holds the view that Israel is “a wholly-owned subsidiary of the United States government” and a “pariah state” engaged in an illegal occupation.

**McChesney contributed to Barack Obama in 2004, when he was running for the Senate in Illinois, and then-Rep. and now Senator Bernie Sanders, socialist from Vermont.**

But in 2008, he supported Rep. Dennis Kucinich, who advocated a federal “Department of Peace,” and former Senator John Edwards, later exposed as an adulterer. Back in 2000, McChesney contributed to Ralph Nader’s run for president.

On the Senate level, McChesney contributed financially to Senators Russell Feingold of Wisconsin, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Jon Tester of Montana, and James Webb of Virginia, and Connecticut Senate candidate Ned Lamont. McChesney featured both Brown and Sanders on his radio show several times.

McChesney also contributed to the Progressive Patriots Fund, the leadership political action committee of Senator Feingold, and the campaigns of Reps. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (Illinois), Chet Edwards (Texas) and Donna Edwards (Md.).

### **The Center for American Progress**

McChesney’s well-financed Free Press is not alone in the effort to transform the media along Marxist lines. Supporting the project is the Center for American Progress (CAP), the Soros-funded group that employed Mark Lloyd before he went to work at the FCC as Associate General Counsel and chief diversity officer. CAP released a proposal for “an independent and stable funding stream for public media” in its *Change for America* book project that was designed to influence the Obama Administration. The sources for the report included books and articles written by McChesney.

The author, Lauren Strayer, was a producer at Air America, the liberal radio network that went through bankruptcy in 2006.

Not surprisingly, Strayer would later surface as a contributor to the Free Press report, “Public Media’s Moment,” which urged “new public funding for new public media” and the creation of a “White House Commission on Public Media” to bring this about.

This same proposal was recently adopted by discredited former CBS Evening News anchorman Dan Rather, who called for a “White House Commission on Public Media” during an appearance before the Aspen Institute. Rather was a featured speaker at the 2008 conference of McChesney’s Free Press and has become a hero of the progressive “media reform” movement.

## **Obama’s Media Control Strategy**

In addition to trying to seize control of the health care and energy sectors, the Obama Administration is implementing a national “broadband plan” to redefine the media and transform America’s system of government. It’s designed, they say, to provide “open government and civic engagement.” But it looks increasingly like an excuse for the federal government to control the Internet and access to information and even tell us what is truth.

**Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute recently explained at a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) "National Broadband Plan Workshop" that it is necessary to have "a common space with shared facts." Armed with \$7.2 billion of "stimulus" money, the federal government is going to provide this. It looks like various progressive groups are lining up at the public trough for their share of the loot. They have in mind what the George Soros-funded Free Press calls "an alternative media infrastructure."**

If you think we already have that, with public TV and radio, think again. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which has received \$8 billion in federal tax dollars since it was created in 1967, is not considered radical enough by these folks. The Free Press favors an additional \$50 billion "Public Media Trust fund" financed by a tax on home electronic devices. It also wants the federally-funded AmeriCorps to finance jobs for journalists.

A new national broadband plan, combined with the just-announced FCC plan for "net neutrality," or regulating access to the Internet, provides the opportunity for the federal government to define a "new public square" with a "common space with shared facts," as Ornstein put it at the August 6 FCC event. He explained, "It's something that was easier when we had three broadcast channels and virtually everybody in the society tuned into them."

Those were the days, you may remember, when Walter Cronkite claimed "That's the way it is," and many people believed him. We know better now. But Ornstein seems to be pining for the "good old days" when Cronkite and other liberals dominated the dissemination of news and information.

**These days we have conservative talk radio, Fox News, and alternatives to the "mainstream" media on the Internet. It is obvious that the Obama Administration and its progressive backers don't appreciate this new state of affairs.**

Ornstein contrasted what can be, under federal direction, to what we are witnessing "now on health reform," when so many dissenting voices are being heard. He added, "It becomes much more difficult when you have a cacophonous system with fragmented areas of communication." And that "cacophony and fragmentation" is most apparent on the Internet, he said.

**In other words, the conservatives are standing in the way of Obama's health care reform plan.**

While the Internet is apparently confusing people with too much information, Ornstein said that the Internet also offers "multiple opportunities" to "develop a public square." He made these remarks at an event presided over by Obama's FCC chairman Julius Genachowski. The assumption of the exercise was that the federal government, under the cover of a national broadband plan, should not only regulate the Internet but provide new media for the public.

Assisting Genachowski is Mark Lloyd, Associate General Counsel and chief diversity officer at the agency. Lloyd used to work at the Benton Foundation, which is assisting this effort and previously issued a report recommending that the Obama Administration "should adopt policies to ensure that all Americans" have the ability to:

- "Know when you need information to help resolve a problem;
- "Know from whom, when, where, and how to seek that needed information;
- "Know how to differentiate between authentic and unauthentic information;
- "Know how to organize information and interpret it correctly once retrieved; and
- "Know how to use the information to solve the problem or make the decision."

The idea of the federal government telling people how to "differentiate between authentic and inauthentic information" is frightening. But this is part of Benton's "Action Plan for America."

**Not surprisingly, the Benton home page features a tribute to the late Walter Cronkite from President Obama. Like Ornstein, it longs for the days when the liberal media dominated the news business.**

Once Mark Lloyd left the Benton Foundation for the Center for American Progress, the two organizations collaborated on a letter demanding that the FCC require that broadcasters meet "public interest" obligations, provide access to the media by various groups, and "enhance political discourse." All of these measures are designed to give left-wing "progressives" more access to the media.

**Now Lloyd is in a position to bring this about through federal regulation.**

"What we really need in this country," Lloyd says, "is... a competitive alternative to commercial broadcasting" that would be supported by the public and "fully financed." The Free Press favors "funding of an alternative media infrastructure."

It sounds suspiciously like the "new public square" is the "public option" for the media.

### **Key personnel and policies:**

- **Robert W. McChesney** (Founder of Free Press. Admitted Socialist, co-editor of socialist journal *Monthly Review*. Says "media reform" is "part of our broader struggle" for socialism.
- **John Nichols**, co-founder of Free Press, speaker at 2006 convention of Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, Washington correspondent for *The Nation*
- **James Early** (Free Press board member and contributor to *CrossRoads* magazine, openly Marxist journal).
- **Josh Silver** (executive director, Free Press).
- **Ben Scott** (Policy director - worked for socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders).

- **Craig Aaron** (Senior Program Director - formerly worked for *In These Times*, socialist paper)
- **Timothy Wu** (Chairman of Free Press Board. Columbia U. Professor who says U.S. Constitution is flawed because it does not address “the abuse of private power.”)
- **Lauren Strayer** (Contributor to Free Press “Changing Media” book, previously worked for Demos and Air America)
- **Julius Genachowski**, FCC chairman under Obama and drafted media policy agenda for Obama (see below). Was Senior Legal Counsel for the FCC under Clinton.
- **Mark Lloyd**, FCC Associate General Counsel, Chief Diversity Officer (attended May 14, 2009 “Changing Media” Free Press Summit, Spoke at 2008 Free Press “National Conference for Media Reform” conf. Came to FCC from Soros-funded Center for American Progress. Also worked with Soros’ Open Society Institute.
- **Susan Crawford**, White House National Economic Council. Former member of the board of ICANN (Internet Corp for Assigned Names and Numbers). Was speaker at Free Press May 14, 2009 “Changing Media” summit. Founder of “One Web Day,” – “Earth Day for the Internet” - whose slogan is, “One Web. One World. One Wish.”
- FCC member **Michael Copps** (speaker at Free Press Summit). Favors PBSS – “a Public Broadcasting System on Steroids.”

**December 18, 2008** Letter to “President-elect Obama” on need to “shift toward communications policy in the public interest.” **Signers include:** Free Press, ACLU, Color of Change.org, Green for All, Media Matters for America, MoveOn.org, NetRoots Nation, Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Van Jones, Markos Moulitsas (Daily Kos), Josh Silver of Free Press

**PASSED: \$7.2 billion in “Broadband stimulus funds”** to link “public media outlets, educational, governmental and civic institutions.” Most provided through the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The Benton Foundation is spearheading efforts to get the federal "stimulus" Internet money into the hands of "progressive" groups and state and local governments. Mark Lloyd, now at the FCC, served as general counsel to the Benton Foundation.

#### **GOALS:**

- **Expand federally-funded AmeriCorps to “include journalistic activities as part of its mission.”** Craig Aaron of Free Press says “What if we took a few thousand AmeriCorps jobs and gave them to newsgathering organizations?”
- **“New Public Funding for New Public Media”** – Free Press Proposes a \$50 billion “Public Media Trust Fund” financed by a “Consumer Electronics Fee” – a tax of 0.5 percent for every home electronic device. Free Press praises Columbia University School of Journalism report, *The Reconstruction of American Journalism*, for proposing “new investment in public media.”