

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



OCTOBER
29
2007



By Si Frumkin

THE CURSE OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH

One of democracy's drawbacks – and ironically one of its blessings as well – is freedom of speech. It inhibits governmental censorship and control, but is responsible for another censorship that is no less insidious. It is the *de facto* censorship by the media themselves that have morphed from meaningful information providers to shameless pursuers of profit by emphasizing sensationalism, titillation and cults of unimportant but photogenic "personalities".

Freedom of speech practically guarantees that the individuals or entities that control the information media have almost full control of what they choose to print or telecast.



The non-governmental media control is absolute, effective, pervasive but, at the same time, it is unacknowledged, deniable and hardly ever discussed, evaluated or even noticed. Those who control the

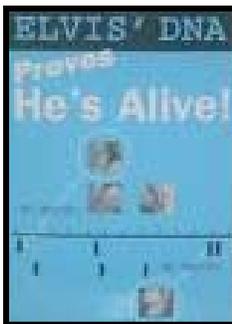
information industry – the corporations and conglomerates that own the newspapers, magazines, cable channels and TV stations, as well as the publishers and managers that run them have the right, based on the 1st Amendment, to publish anything they choose but they also have the right not to cover anything they choose not to cover.

Here are two admittedly absurd and hypothetical examples of both: If a publisher decides that the front page or the evening news should report an Elvis Presley sighting, riding a pink whale off Malibu, then that is what will be run. And if the same executive has an irrational dislike for say, Finland, he can decree that nothing about Finland will ever be aired or printed; the taboo country will cease to exist, with no questions asked. There may, of course, be protests from the slighted Finns or our State Department, but since this also will not be published, no one will know about it.

Is there oversight? Well, not really. Those who work in the information industries are supposed to be able to police themselves. We are expected to assume that reporters and editors are more ethical,

moral, honest, responsible and truthful than physicians, attorneys, police (we all know of the dreaded Internal Affairs Dept.) or other professionals who have professional boards that investigate, govern and control their aberrant behavior. There are no boards in the information industry. Some media organizations have salaried ombudsmen to judge and examine public's complaints but they are selected from, and appointed by, the executives of the entity to be investigated. Are they really impartial? Maybe.

I moved to Los Angeles in the early 1950s when there were many newspapers to choose from: Times, Examiner, Mirror, Herald, Daily News and a few others. With time, most of them merged, merged again, and disappeared. The winner was the L.A. Times whose circulation dwarfs the only remaining competitor – the Daily News – by about exposed for something that it overlooked. It doesn't have to try harder - if it wasn't printed in the Times then, for all practical purposes, it really didn't happen.

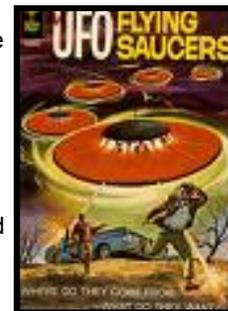


The other result is that the Times has become a politically biased, sloppy and self-important sheet that keeps losing readers but still produces an acceptable and respectable profit.

Here, just of the top of my head, are just a few examples of news stories that you probably haven't heard about. Believe me, there are many more.

In a recent poll, New Yorkers were asked whether presidential contender Rudy Giuliani, their former mayor, or current mayor, Michael Bloomberg, would make a better U.S. president. The surprising result was just 29% for the supposedly beloved Giuliani and 46% for Bloomberg - almost a 2:1 spread! I think that this is interesting – L.A. Times apparently doesn't.

And then, as a real follow-up on the hypothetical taboo of Finland, there is Georgia. It is an independent country in the Caucasus that used to be a Soviet republic before 1991. It is a Christian democracy, has a population of about 5 million – about the size of Israel, Norway, Finland, Ireland or Denmark – and is our steadfast ally. A few years ago it elected a pro-American president and its relationship with Russia deteriorated. During the last year or so, Russia has been brutally deporting Georgian residents from Russia to Georgia, has prohibited the sale of Georgian wine (a major export item) in Russia, has repeatedly closed the pipeline supplying natural gas to Georgia – most heating and cooking in Georgia uses gas - and has stopped all air, rail, car and sea traffic, communications, money transfers and even all mail and package deliveries between Georgia and Russia. A Georgian acquaintance in Los Angeles needed medicine from Georgia for his mother in Moscow. Since there is no mail, UPS or Fedex from Georgia to Russia, the medicine had to be mailed to the U.S. and was taken to Moscow by an American tourist. The L.A. Times, for reasons best known to its staff, apparently decided that this bullying of a small pro-American country was much less important than the adventures of Paris Hilton, the trial of Phil Spector, suffering Palestinians, or the selection for printing of overwhelmingly only those letters that blame Bush for everything bad that has happened in the world since Pearl Harbor.



Lack of competition has impacted our automobile industry, our school system, and the automatic election of incumbents. We are now seeing the impact of internal censorship and the absence of competition on our information industry. ☺

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ANN COULTER WANTS JEWS TO BECOME CHRISTIAN -- SO WHAT?

Dennis Prager, October 16, 2007

Those who label Ann Coulter an anti-Semite do damage to the battle against anti-Semitism. I say this as a committed Jew, a religious Jew, a Jewish writer and lecturer, a past college instructor in Jewish history, co-author of a widely read book on anti-Semitism, recipient of the American Jewish Press Association's Prize for Excellence in Jewish Commentary, instructor in Torah at the American Jewish University, and a man who has fought anti-Semitism all his life.



Ann Coulter

There is nothing in what Ann Coulter said to a Jewish interviewer on CNBC that indicates she hates Jews or wishes them ill, or does damage to the Jewish people or the Jewish state. And if none of those criteria is present, how can someone be labeled anti-Semitic?

What damage has she ever done to Jews? What is wrong with a person believing that it would be better if

another person adopted their faith? Is there one liberal who doesn't believe that a conservative would be better -- "perfected," if you will -- by embracing liberal beliefs and values? Why is it laudable for a liberal to hope that conservatives convert to liberalism, but dangerous and hate-filled when a Christian hopes that Jews or anyone else will go to heaven (that is, after all, Ann Coulter's and most other Christians' primary concern) by believing in Jesus?

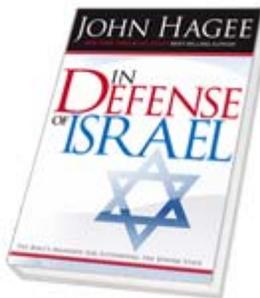
I have read Jewish and non-Jewish writers who argue that Ann Coulter's words will lead to another Auschwitz. How does one respond to irrationality? How does one respond to hysteria?

There is also a move to boycott Ann Coulter, so dangerous are her words. Of course, there is no such Jewish or liberal boycott of former President Jimmy Carter, who has done real damage to the Jewish people by describing Israel as an "apartheid" state in the very title of his anti-Israel book. In fact, Carter was invited to speak on his loathsome book at Brandeis University, an ostensibly Jewish university. But for many Jews and liberals, real hatred, real damage to Jewish security can only come from the right, especially from Christians on the right. So Ann Coulter, who has done nothing in her life to compromise Jewish welfare, is to be boycotted, but Jimmy Carter is worthy of invitations to speak. Jewish groups even invite John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, the authors of "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," which is essentially a tempered modern-day version of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." But

Ann Coulter is beyond the pale. And she said nothing to harm Jews.

She said she believes that Jews who accept Jesus as their savior are "perfected." I fail to see why this is some form of hate-speech, let alone the basis of anti-Semitism, as stated by Abe Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, which often defames conservative Christians, whom he and his organization hold to be the greatest domestic threats to America.

As a practicing Jew, I do not agree with Ann Coulter's theology any more than those attacking her do. But I am neither offended by her nor frightened by her or her beliefs. She believes that Christianity is better than Judaism. So what? Why is that in any way different from liberals thinking that liberalism is truer and morally superior to conservatism? Or conservatives thinking that their



values are superior to liberal values?

Liberals not only believe that conservatives are philosophically imperfect, but they often believe that conservatives are bad human beings (something in no way implied by Coulter about Jews). Howard Dean has said that conservatives don't care about children who go to bed hungry. Liberals yearn for a world without conservatives at least as much as most be-

lieving Christians want a world without non-Christians. The difference is many liberals are immeasurably more likely to impose their views on others than Christian Americans are. Liberal judges impose their views -- e.g., on same-sex marriage -- on society. And liberal educators force young students to watch Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth," the former



Pastor John Hagee, founder of Christians United for Israel, speaks at 2007 AIPAC conference in Washington, DC

vice president's hysterical beliefs about impending doom -- and offer no countering viewpoint.

As fate and irony would have it, this past Sunday night I was the keynote speaker at the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. Since 1981, the church, led by Pastor John Hagee, has had an annual "Night to Honor Israel." Five thousand Christians came to this year's event, where they heard and sang Hebrew songs and watched their pastor give \$8 million to various Israeli and Jewish charities.

Those are Ann Coulter's people, and they are, by and large, the best friends the Jewish people have today. And since Judaism teaches that we judge others by their behavior, not their beliefs, this Jew thanks them. And fears those who fear them. One day, God forbid, should there be real anti-Semitism in America, these hysterics will have cried wolf so many times that no one will listen. ✘



*** PC OR NOT PC—THAT IS THE QUESTION** (*POLITICALLY CORRECT)

Once upon a time, not so long ago, Michael Ramirez was the editorial cartoonist for the Los Angeles Times— a major, influential, respectable newspaper. Then, Ramirez was fired and there was no explanation. Was he too controversial? Offensive? Not politically correct enough?

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Here are a just a few of the pictures Ramirez drew. I think they are worth more than a thousand words to help you decide why Michael Ramirez no longer works at the L.A. Times.

Oh, total disclosure: I do not know Ramirez, never met him and never spoke or corresponded with him. I think he is a talented and honest artist who deserves better than being blacklisted for not being PC enough.

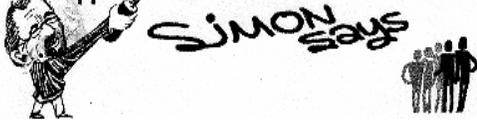
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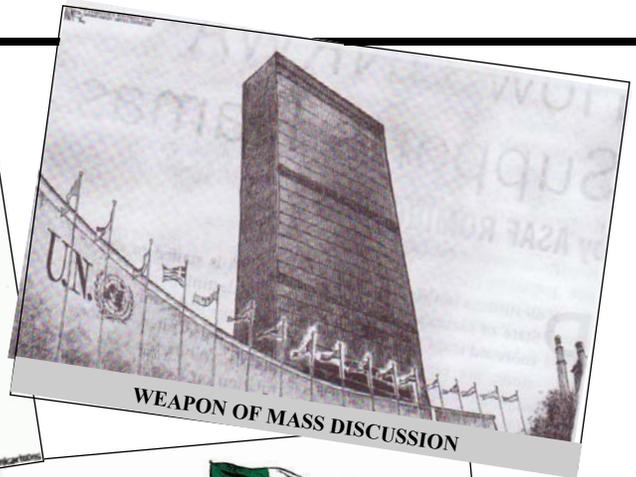
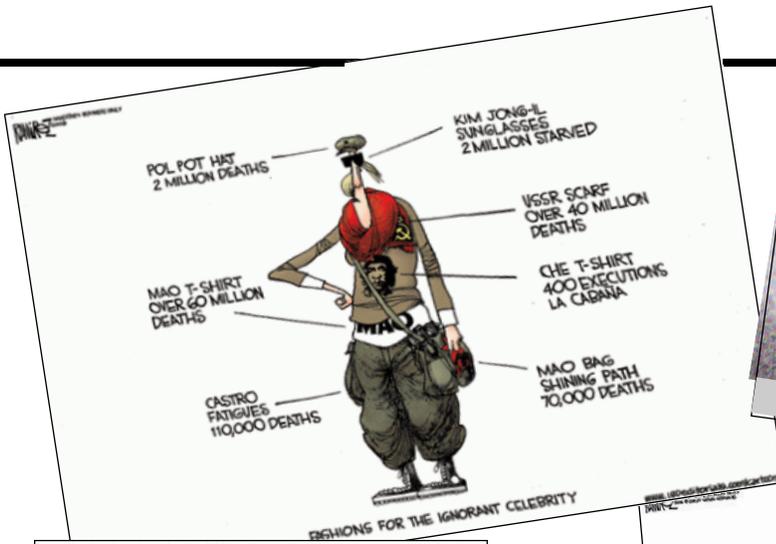
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SO, WHY DO YOU THINK RAMIREZ DOESN'T WORK AT THE L.A. TIMES ANYMORE?