

CORPORATE INROADS & LIBRARIANSHIP: The Fight for the Soul of the Profession in the New Millennium

by Peter McDonald

At heart, censorship is all about choice. In the United States, the freedom to choose what we want to see, hear and read is granted as a right by our Constitution, which specifically protects these rights from government or external interference. In the smaller sphere of our profession, the focus of the censorship debate, of course, rests primarily on issues attending the high-profile banning of books and the muzzling of risque ideas. Since these are rights granted to us by the First Amendment, and are specifically identified in our "Library Bill of Rights," to its credit, our profession has often been in the forefront championing our Right to Read in equally high profile litigations.

But if this were the only, or even primary measure of censorship faced by our culture, the issues and implications of the debate would be easier to untangle, if not in the courts than certainly with our wallets. After all, in most locales, we can buy the banned book and have done with it. In short, the common discussion of censorship as portrayed in the mainstream media is a red herring. It is simplistically framed and fails utterly to probe deeper into the abiding dilemma facing our democracy. What we get instead is a sound bite portraying a struggle of opposing, yet in some mysterious way, equally valid ideas, with merits and human drama on both sides! Gays vs. The Christian Right and so forth. These imbroglios gain wide notoriety not because they are particularly intractable or menacing in and of themselves, but because the corporate structure which defines these "censorship" debates in the media, clearly wants the focus of the discussion to remain glued to these diverting phenomena and not, as will be addressed in this article, on the structure of corporate hegemony itself. Plainly put, how does a free and informed citizenry remain so, when the

entire structure of our society is permeated to its core by the paradigm of corporate hegemony, a power indeed which dominates many aspects of our lives. Since multi-national corporations overwhelmingly control what it is we see, hear and read, avenues by which a democratic society might logically inform itself, where do we go to step outside this dominant exemplar to find an unbiased corpus of ideas untainted by the cynical values of the marketplace?

One logical place to go, of course, and one of the few remaining openly civic spaces remaining in our harried world, is the public library, a place which we can only hope offers access to published material infused with humanistic, environmental, and people-centered world views. Unfortunately, this, too, is a simplistic description. For it will be the task of this inquiry to show that this Norman Rockwell impression of the public library (and academic ones too, for that matter) as a civic forum of free inquiry, is slowly and systematically being co-opted by the same models of corporate management which the libraries of our nation once prided themselves on keeping at arm's length.

This article argues that it is precisely this corporate hegemony which systematically squelches free expression in art, culture, information access and yes, by extension, also in librarianship itself. This surely is the real fulcrum of the censorship debate. The greatest threat to our experiencing the fullness of our First Amendment rights comes not from noisy cabals of incensed zealots bent on banning books, but rather from corporate America itself where "choice" becomes nothing more than another commodity marketed like any other — stream-lined, made safe, and sold like a sugary confection to the masses a la Wal-Mart. Arguably, financial bottom lines (it won't sell), self protection (beware the labor movement/social issues) and an equally palpable fear of controversy (why stir up trouble?) are the core reasons corporations stifle the unfettered flow of challenging ideas which might otherwise "shock" our collective sensibilities to action. But without that unfettered flow, the democratizing debate of true citizenship is handicapped at the outset. For as a citizenry, we suffer the consequences of this consolidated access to ideas. We see this in the opaque tyranny of technology, which bamboozles us into believing that the glut of "information" brought to our computer screens at ever faster speeds of gadgetry, somehow makes up for the increasing dearth in the breadth and depth of what is being offered. This is the false algorithm of the Information Age which states: more information + faster access = more choice! Librarians for the most part no more question this nod to the "bottom line" of our pervasive corporatism than they do the technological wizardry which defines it. In this cozy acceptance of the status quo lies a much more insidious

corporate dominance which has the potential to deaden the very soul of our profession.

Naturally, the censorship of unfettered ideas also has analogies in the cut-throat marketing of common goods. At first blush, the marketing strategies of large corporations may seem to take us a long way from the matter at hand. Public and academic libraries, after all, pride themselves in the abstract on their independence from the corporate structures and the profit-seeking dictums which drive the private sector. However, upon closer examination, there is arguably not a single task accomplished in our modern library systems which is not directly or indirectly dominated by external corporate decision making. This is hardly news to librarians who are members of ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table or the Progressive Librarians Guild. This small cadre of "conscientious objectors" is but a drop in the bucket when one considers the extent to which the general membership of the American Libraries Association has intertwined its operations and organizational goals with those of multi-million dollar corporations such as EBSCO, Meckler Media and Ameritech.

If, as has been argued, censorship is at heart a matter of free choice, free of corporate meddling and zealous restriction, a brief detour to the local supermarket might be instructive. This is not as far-fetched as might at first be construed. Consider for a moment the sheer unending volume of products for sale on the shelves of the supermarket nearest you. Among corporate apologists, this is evidence that the public is always given a "choice" by the mechanisms of "free enterprise" which happily supply this plethora of goods. After all, if the average shopper can "choose" between forty-eight brands of breakfast cereal stacked on the shelves, surely they have the right to make their "choice" with their wallets! The consumer, in fact, is given no choice with this shabby simulacrum because 90% of the cereals on major supermarket shelves are produced by just one or two huge conglomerates (General Mills, Kellogg). The clear intention of these corporations is to use their size and financial muscle to demand of every supermarket chain with whom they do business that the supermarket must also buy the forty-seven other bogus brands of cereals offered by the company. Nutritionists have proven these are virtually indistinguishable food stuffs (grain, sugar, salt and food coloring) which have simply been shaped, colored and packaged differently by product wizards in sales departments in order for the conglom-erate to flood the allotted shelf space with its own volume of wares. Flood the shelves, and competitors, especially small competitors, are denied any chance at a market share.

Naturally, any sensible supermarket chain out to make a profit for itself will agree to this bullying scam for reasons too obvious and numerous to describe here. But the strategic intentions of agribusiness are perfectly apparent. Corporate bullying (or in the imaginary parlance of pundits this "good marketing strategy by a corporate leader in the field") virtually eliminates from supermarket shelves breakfast cereals from smaller wholesalers offering organic foods or locally produced granolas, or non-traditional grain products and so on. These latter offerings are closer to a real choice, of course, because they empower local control of the economy, yet to a citizenry self-servingly uninformed, the sham stacks of forty-eight brands of cereals are so easily swallowed as "choice" precisely because they "look" so different, no wonder corporations get away with the things they do. Besides, to demand real variety and choice would mean bothering to take the time to demand of the supermarket manager that you want the off-beat products which were elbowed out of the way by those Sugar Puff and Frankenberry boxes. So much easier to grab brand X and get on with your busy day!

It is a sad fact, but librarianship today suffers from this same miasma of false "choice" as does the rest of society. At all levels of the profession, there seems to be a growing lack of critical self-examination of what corporate inroads into our service means, notably when librarians make their management decisions but leave corporate-dominated assumptions unexamined. Like Janus, this peculiar self-censorship has many faces which merely vary to greater or lesser extent in their level of insidiousness. And all facets of the profession are prone. From collection development, to discarding aging card catalogs in favor of OPACs, to corporate sponsored symposia for librarians, to installing expensive digital technologies, corporations increasingly call the shots on how libraries do their business.

One area where this willingness to accept corporate-dominated information is plainly and uncritically evident lies in the selection process of collection development officers seen in most libraries. For example, studies have shown that most collection development selectors rely on the major, commercial book review journals — *Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly*, to make their materials selection choices — 55% of the time, apparently, with publishers catalogs a distant 24% (Serebnick 1992). While not an insidious statistic in and of itself, other studies have shown that these highly influential journals consistently review the output of big publishers compared to small presses by a ratio of almost 18 to 1 (Cullars 1984). It hardly needs emphasizing, but recall that small presses, to their credit, consistently provide alternate

viewpoints which push against the current of acceptable opinion, publishing ideas and controversial material rarely found in the catalogs and book lists of major commercial publishers. But the likelihood of their being added to library collections against odds of 18 to 1 is at best problematic, and in reality, disheartening since they are marginalized at selection source and often pooh-poohed in the mainstream journals' reviews in any case. Furthermore, as cost-cutting trends accelerate at both public and academic libraries, shared cataloging becomes the norm through computerized nationwide systems such as OCLC. With so few small press titles being processed to begin with, acquisition decisions are often adversely affected due to lack of an existing online record. The small press book is simply not purchased for lack of an existing record or a Library of Congress CIP (Cataloging-in-Publication) record (Lee 1995).

Elsewhere, in a polemic article published several years ago in *The New Yorker* (1994), Nicholson Baker argued convincingly that the online public catalogs of our major libraries are increasingly becoming little more than mirror images of one another, a pale reflection of the rich heritage of our written culture, with only selected and highly prized collections differentiating these "access points." Naturally, the quirky depth and often serendipitous breadth of the old card catalog, which reflected the unique holdings of a particular library, has been universally superseded by the aseptic wonder of the commercially engineered, painfully literal, electronic catalog which looks unremittingly the same whether you are at a workstation at Yale University on Long Island Sound, or at a terminal at the Tacoma Public Library on Puget Sound half a continent away. In short, libraries are mimicking the corporate tendency to streamline operations in the name of budgetary efficiency and faster access.

Is this a creeping corporate form of self-imposed censorship? Certainly. Inherent in these time-saving, faster-access, print-on-demand technologies, are barely hidden agendas and structures of power which consistently uphold the highest denominator of the status quo. Not so long ago, for example, the charge of the Government Printing Office and other federal information repositories was to publish free of charge (or at minimal cost), the full array of documents pertaining to national governance in the broadest sense of our democracy. Flawed as this system may have been, it was certainly a cut above the current politically-motivated trend to outsource government documents to commercial vendors who then offer these same federal documents our tax dollars originally produced back to us electronically at exorbitant per-minute prices. Nowadays, if you don't have cash wads in pocket or a handy \$2000 computer lying around,

accessing federal publications can be a daunting challenge, especially for the disenfranchised and the poor. It has become so costly, in fact, many libraries now charge their users for this service. (Chaffee 1995)

An anecdotal observation here might be instructive. Recently, there was a contentious debate among science selectors (to which this author was party) as to whether Cornell University should join a consortia (NERL, the Northeast Research Libraries Network) and collectively sign a contract with Academic Press for online access to an important selection of their science e-journals. From the outset, there was a vocal faction (suffering from that common library ailment — "bandwagonitis"), who espoused the morbid fear held by many librarians that institutions not hell-bent for online access might be left in the dark ages of print, while sister institutions basked in the new dawn of a nascent "virtual library." Be this as it may, to the credit of the majority of Cornell science selectors, the contract with Academic was spurned outright for it placed the powers of access and preservation to the journals in the hands of a commercial publisher which apparently had no real idea how it would retain its market share or increase its profits in this emerging online environment. A variety of hobbled pay schemes and access mechanisms were hastily thrown together as the negotiations between NERL and Academic unfolded. The final contract proffered was little more than a muddled shot in the dark, for it stipulated, in part, that retention of print copies had to coexist with the purchase of online access for a period of three years. This essentially increased the cost for the same material (now in separate formats) by something close to 30%. To the selectors' way of thinking, this gave Academic Press an unearned windfall in revenues as well as the right to dictate how the selectors would go about their collection duties by tying their hands to retain titles they might otherwise choose to cancel. To its credit, Cornell stood alone against the contract and NERL, when the latter signed with Academic Press despite the contract's obvious shortcomings. Nevertheless, one AUL for collections at a sister Ivy League institution crowed via e-mail: "Signing this contract, brings us to the threshold of instigating the virtual library of the future!" This is the key slogan of bandwagonitis as it pertains to technology: To be *au currant*, friends, you gotta have it!

The apotheosis of this trend of signing away autonomy to corporate interests in the name of the "library of the future," came this past autumn, when Hawaii State Librarian Bart Kane peremptorily decided to provide a \$11.2 million system-wide outsourcing contract to mega-wholesaler Baker & Taylor (B&T), one of the biggest corporate book vendors in the field. By this single action,

Kane handed over selection, acquisitions, cataloging, and processing for all public libraries in the state of Hawaii to an unaffiliated, publicly unaccountable corporation with no integral ties to the citizens of Hawaii. According to *School Library Journal* (1996), Kane's "decision to shift selection to a vendor was necessary to comply with the governor's request for deep budget cuts." This is the tired argument of the bureaucrat, a familiar ruse often used by library administrators to justify cuts in service in order to provide, among other things, access to streamlined electronic resources which are usually exorbitantly expensive. Excellent articles by Celeste West and John Buschman (West 1983; Buschman 1994) handily refute this old chestnut of justifying all sorts of management shen-anigans in the name of budget cuts in their respective articles on library censorship.

As for Baker and Taylor, they have defended themselves, in part, by stressing that they have over 18,000 publishers' addresses on file and can readily provide the breadth of material necessary to accommodate the "Aloha State's" gamut of reading tastes. But a 1988 study of B&T, indicated that "the top 200 commercial publishers account for 90% of Baker and Taylor's business. The top 50 publishers account for 80%" (Mutter 1998). In other words, of their 18,000 publishers on file, "choice" to B&T really means the top 50 commercial publishers with whom they have cozy and ongoing accounts. To any thinking Hawaiian this must be a troubling statistic indeed, notably so since Hawaii itself has a thriving cottage industry of small presses which must now compete with the entrenched accounts of B&T's big mainland publishers. Relationships between these small local presses and front library staff, cultivated over decades, have summarily been lost to corporate streamlining in the wake of Kane's decision. Indeed, e-mails posted by disaffected selectors within the Hawaiian state library system, clearly show that their worst fears have materialized. (Carpenter 1997)

Obviously, Baker & Taylor have not lived up to their promise to provide the breadth and depth of locally meaningful material to Hawaiian state libraries, and recent discussions on the matter on PLGNet, have revealed that B&T's actual contract is worded in such a way as to make the mega-vendor virtually unaccountable for its shoddy materials selection no matter how egregious its behavior. In a rear-guard action to bring attention to this matter, the Librarians Association of Hawaii has specifically asked that the B&T contract be audited (as noted in a *Honolulu Advertiser* article on a hearing before the Hawaii State Supreme Court). Worse yet, there is a clause in the B&T contract which states: "The STATE acknowledges and agrees that the Performance Targets set forth

in Exhibit B attached hereto and made a part hereof are target goals only and Contractor's failure to achieve any or all of them will not constitute an Event of Default." Sound familiar? The author at press time, was not able to obtain a copy of "Exhibit B," but the gist of the clause, in any case, is clear. As one recent e-mail posted to PLGNet stated: "B&T therefore has been left off the hook." (Tomoika 1997)

Then in October last year, Hawaii state library staff received a memo from their central administration forbidding them from using internal e-mail to air their views on this matter or to discuss the issues and implications of the B&T contract. (Denwall n.d.)

Where was ALA's vaunted championing of First Amendment rights on this restrictive dictum? There was none, at least not from the Association at large or from its Chicago offices. To its credit, the Alternatives in Print Task Force of ALA sponsored a program on the issue at the ALA mid-winter conference in D.C. in February of 1997. But this is at best a pallid reprimand of State Librarian Bart Kane et al's peremptory behavior. If this is the extent of ALA's moral muscle, let alone of its outrage at censorship within its own ranks, what hope for the profession at large?

In an additional instance the e-mail message quoted here was sent out to the world from OCLC headquarters on January 16, 1997 from Marifay Makssour.

OCLC, ACADEMIC BOOK CENTER, SOLINET TO PROVIDE AUTOMATED COLLECTION AND TECHNICAL SERVICES TO NEW FLORIDA UNIVERSITY

OCLC, Academic Book Center and the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) will provide automated collection and technical services to the library at the Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida's 10th and newest state university, which is scheduled to open in August 1997.

Under the unique two-year agreement, OCLC and Academic Book Center will provide a fully cataloged, shelf-ready, opening-day collection, as well as ongoing collection development, acquisitions, cataloging, authority control, physical processing and fund accounting. SOLINET will provide training and support.

"Our library has embarked on a bold, new approach where the collection and technical services operation is completely outsourced from day one," said

Carolyn Gray, Dean of Library Services at Florida Gulf Coast University. "Our objective is to provide fully cataloged books and materials that support the university's curriculum and that minimize physical handling by library staff.

"By outsourcing our book purchasing to Academic Book Center and our technical processing functions to OCLC, we can accomplish this goal and focus our limited resources on direct delivery of high quality, customized library services to students and faculty," Dr. Gray said.

Thus the Library of the Future will apparently have all collection and technical processing functions outsourced from day one. The ever present OCLC, by the way, was originally chartered by member libraries as a not-for-profit organization to assist in the creation of an online union catalog of members' holdings. "In 1967, the presidents of the colleges and universities in the state of Ohio founded the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC) to develop a computerized system in which the libraries of Ohio academic institutions could share resources and reduce costs" (OCLC n.d.). What started out as a modest mid-western collaboration between a handful of public and academic libraries, has become today Online Computer Library Center, Inc., a corporate-dominated behemoth whose structure, governance and business practices are indistinguishable from any Fortune 500 company. Here in a nutshell lies the dilemma we are addressing, that a truly nonprofit library consortia evolved into a world a giant in every way mimicking a transnational corporation which has had to defend its "nonprofit" status in both the press and the courts. The direction our profession is headed is made abundantly clear in all these instances.

The American Library Association's Code of Professional Ethics unambiguously states that ALA members are "explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information." Furthermore, they must resist "all efforts by groups or individuals to censor library materials." These are high sounding words, and were doubtless penned in good faith when first codified. But what becomes of that vaunted "access to information" when the very mechanisms of access, namely our computers, our databases, our networks are wholly corporate designed and in the case of many databases, wholly created and priced for commercial gain? Little wonder that among the 600 odd databases available via Knight-Ridder's DIALOG system, not one is alternative or progressive in nature. Ditto Nexis and Lexis. This comes as no big surprise. These systems were not designed to inform a

concerned citizenry, they were marketed expressly for business and legal enterprises, and only incidentally for libraries. And even not-for-profit databases such as AGRICOLA (agriculture) and MEDLINE (medicine), are dominated by the ethics and practices of the status quo, in this case by mainstream science and big medicine respectively. Little wonder that agricultural systems such as organic cultivation of crops and alternative medicinal practices such as homeopathy or even chiropractice receive such short shrift, forming a mere fraction of the bibliographic citations of the whole (less than 2%) in both databases. There is probably no consciously nefarious intent here by the collaborators who compile these databases, since both MEDLINE and AGRICOLA are federally funded enterprises produced by federally funded libraries. But both the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the National Agriculture Library (NAL) are unquestionably influenced and heavily so by their respective clientele, namely the entrenched corporate hierarchies of the health-care juggernaut on the one hand, and on the other by global agri-business, which funds most of the institutional research on farm animals and crops which ends up in the citation databases in the first place. A librarian wanting to assist a patron with a query on pesticide-free agriculture or homeopathy would be hard pressed to find much by way of an index or finding aid. There's simply no money in it, so it isn't produced in any meaningful manner, and neither of the above-mentioned citation databases is in any way comprehensive on these topics.

The point here is that there is nowhere a debate in the library press, and least of all at NAL or NLM, about the *a priori* assumption that in creating these databases, the dominant corporate paradigm of big health care and big agribusiness are the dominant purveyors of the "information" indexed. There's a tacit acceptance that "that's just the way things are in the real world" so "what are we supposed to do?" As one librarian at NAL told this author when he asked about the inclusion of alternate ag-systems in AGRICOLA: "We have been given strict guidelines about what is considered acceptable science and what isn't. Many of the journals covering organic topics are not refereed and therefore do not meet minimum criteria for inclusion." Needless to say, the thousands of items produced by state farm bureaus which AGRICOLA indexes annually are hardly science; in fact much of the Farm Bureau material is sponsored by big pesticide companies hawking their toxins. The point is unambiguous. Since the Farm Bureau represents mainstream agriculture *par excellence* and has big bucks behind it, it gets included. Organic agriculture, by comparison, tends to be local, marginalized and cash poor, *ergo* it lacks the clout to self-organize and be heard. The library database AGRICOLA reflects

this bias to its discredit. The basic tenets of this argument can be applied to dozens of other indexes and databases and there's the rub.

In a letter received by this author from Sanford Berman, Head Cataloger of the Hennepin County Library (HCL) in Minnesota, Mr. Berman wrote:

More classism evidence. Although HCL has been suggesting new subject headings to LC for some 3 years now...., the following are still not established, meaning that the very topics/issues themselves don't appear in library catalogs and thus don't seem to be "real": CLASSISM, ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM, CORPORATE POWER, CORPORATE WELFARE.

Mr. Berman's observations are on target. Since the very usage of language in our culture is defined and expressed via centralized sources of distribution such as television and radio, or as in this case — by LC subject headings, it becomes increasingly difficult to even frame the nature of the debate when the very words which define these inter-relationships and avenues of power have been expunged from the public vocabulary by the purveyors of our common culture, e.g. big business and media conglomerates and by extension, by their lackies, state and federal government, of which LC is clearly part.

The same story circulates throughout the profession, in special, public and academic libraries, in our science and humanities collections respectively, and in our protocols of professional behavior across the board. That corporations dominate our profession as publishers, hardware manufacturers, software providers, database creators, network gatekeepers and that an attendant corporate ethic increasingly infuses how library management defines its modus operandi, is a sad fact we, as progressive librarians, must contend with. The hope that organizations such as the American Library Association, or even the Special Library Association, infused as it is with corporate membership, are likely to find their voice to call a halt to this hell-bent romance between corporate-dominated paradigms and the way libraries do their business, is farfetched and unlikely in the extreme.

As with any social cause, the call to action will doubtless come from rank and file members of the profession who are willing to loudly proclaim their outrage. Only through constant agitation is there some modicum of hope that the profession might possibly be awakened from its complacency, but it will be an uphill struggle every step of the way. For one, it is so terribly difficult to even

open up the true terms of the debate without immediate ridicule by the champions of the status quo. And there will be fierce resistance as well. Our unquestioning fascination with technology and with the bottom lines of smart business practice, with the desire to streamline operations, and by our obvious acceptance of corporate-library partnerships, these are powerful forces indeed with entrenched and fiercely partisan protagonists.

Elements of this call to action to oppose corporate inroads in librarianship might reasonably be expected to enlist some of the following tactics (13):

- Be skeptical about fiscal and other "crises"
- Take economics seriously, learn the "facts"
- Challenge hypocrisy
- Maximize every obstacle
- Work hard to maintain solidarity
- Encourage concerned users to speak out
- Establish coalitions with other librarians and other libraries
- Support those who speak out
- Develop alternative media options
- Resist market-speak
- Be pro-active
- Challenge the TINA ("there is no alternative") claim
- Promote participatory democracy

This piece began with talk of choice. Librarianship is obviously at a crossroads. As we near the 21st century, we must ask ourselves what is it as librarians that we hold most dear? Is it a clear and unambiguous adherence to the First Amendment or is it to community standards of propriety? Is it to the inalienable provisions of a free and welcoming civic space open to every citizen in this harried world or is it to a shopping mall mentality hawking infotainment where the homeless, the poor and unwashed are unwelcome? Do we want big business running our business? And what about technology? As material content (books, journals, reference resources, print collections, etc.) are increasingly rendered useless in and of themselves (what good a CD-ROM) without the electronic gadgetry and electricity which alone can access them, (thus rendering as a single mechanism the content and the delivery medium), will our professional standing in our society become synonymous with hardware mechanics and CPU tinkerers? Are we ready for the unending push to upgrade our gadgetry and software every other year at exorbitant cost and at the undoubted expense of personally serving our users? To be sure, these are hard questions. But if we

wish to adhere fiercely to the First Amendment, to preserve the open door policy of libraries as civic forums, if we are committed to shunning non-stop corporate huckstering at our very workstations, and to slowing the relentless march to digitization (in order to formulate and examine its implications at every step coherently, *on our terms*, not Microsoft's), then each and every one of us had better infuse into our daily practice a meaningful discussion of these issues and openly examine their implications among our colleagues, patrons and administrators. Short of that, the Exxon Reading Room will be coming to a library near you!

(The author wishes to express special thanks to Sanford Berman, Charles Willet and others on PLGNet who assisted him with this article. Thanks to Dr. Jane Kelsey of the University of New Zealand for the list on page 43.)

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GII: Global Power Grab by Vigdor Schreibman

A One Trillion Dollar Telecoms Deal

Fins [Federal Information News Syndicate, published by V. Schreibman — eds.] Information Age Library has mounted a new directory: Global Information Infrastructure Links. If you take a look it will give you a rough idea of just how dominant a role international public sector organizations now hold (e.g., ITU, OECD, WTO, GATS, NAFTA, APEC, WIPO, EC, G7), when armed with a franchise of delegated power from the nations of the world to decide global socioeconomic public policies. A stunning example of this pattern took place Feb 15, 1997, when more than 60 countries adopted an agreement to open their own telecommunications systems to foreign exploitation, which is set to enter into force on 1 January 1998. This agreement was negotiated under the auspices of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), World Trade Organization (WTO), and General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). It followed the European Commission's *Bangemann Report*, 26 May 1994, for a "Global Information Society" (Fins-GII-ECb) and the proposal by the United States for "The Global Information Infrastructure: Agenda for Cooperation," announced Feb 1995 (Fins-II2-03).

Data on telecommunications markets covered by the WTO Negotiations on Basic Telecommunications, were released Feb 17 from the International Telecommunication Union database on World Telecommunication Indicators. This reveals that "global telecom services revenue in 1995 stood at \$601.9 billion (in US dollars), a figure which represented 2.1% of global GDP." Just two of the participants in the negotiations, the European Community and its Member States, and the United States, account for 68% of revenue and 58% of international traffic.