

## EDITORIAL

### *Quiet Time*

Censorship is an insidious brutality. In this challenging time in America's history, you would think citizens would want *more* debate, not *less*.

But after four years of planning, on Sept. 23 the Congressional Black Caucus and Fox News will host a 2008 presidential debate in Detroit focused on minority issues. Predictably, John Edwards was first to announce that he wouldn't participate in a debate aired on Fox News. Later, both Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama announced they would join Edwards' boycott. Obama's spokesperson commented, "CNN seems to be a more appropriate host."

Of course, Rupert Murdoch has used the troika of "blood, sex and patriotism" to build his media empire — an empire now poised to acquire the *Wall Street Journal*, an expansion of concern to at least some *WSJ* readers. But Murdoch's gift to America has been huge. His Fox News Channel finally broke the stranglehold of network television news anchored by elite liberals.

Choice is good. Consumers don't want CBS, CNN, or PBS off the air. It's just nice to have Fox News as well — and the ratings prove it.

Tell that to the Democrat presidential hopefuls. They believe fewer options are better and that debate in a democracy should be controlled, no matter who gets hurt. In this case, it was the Congressional Black Caucus, not exactly a right-wing outfit.

*BNW* loosely plays a bit of a Fox News role in that each month we publish ideas that run contrary to the establishment Oregon media. In this state that means being pro-business and pro-job creation. When you take the unorthodox, anti-establishment position, the ugly hand of censorship soon creeps in, in its many not-so-disguised forms.

Emboldened by the results of the '06 election, the Democrat takeover of the legislature, and the re-election of Gov. Kulongoski, the left in Oregon has become more aggressive in their intolerance of opposing viewpoints, especially when those viewpoints are critical of elected leaders. What should be the media's job — challenging the powerful and the status quo — is now considered bad form. Consensus is celebrated, even in journalism where it was once anathema.

This year, we have heard from a number of people, including current and potential advertisers, who have requested that back page columnist Lars Larson be removed. A cursory review of Larson's columns reveals no particularly outrageous items, certainly no hanging offenses. But Larson is the magazine's most vocal "conservative," and the most out front in his opinions. Some see Larson's swipes at the status quo as grounds for firing; we see his disregard for blind consensus as a healthy contribution to the free exchange of ideas. The only thing to be gained by his removal is that the goal posts for discussion would be moved closer to the prevailing orthodoxy that threatens this state.

Another recent example of this stifling attitude comes from *Oregonian* columnist Steve Duin's blog post on June 14, "Randall Pozdena Goes Nuclear." Duin blasts the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors' June discussion in *BNW* on Oregon's economy. Writes Duin, "Given a soapbox, Randall Pozdena, managing director of ECONorthwest and a former member of the Oregon Investment Council, promptly sets fire to it."

*BNW* has received an unprecedented number of positive calls, emails and comments on this report, most highly complimentary of the candor, freshness and unvarnished truth behind the opinions that were shared. For many in the Oregon business community the comments stood out positively, in particular, because of their candor.

And yet here are a few of Pozdena's quotes that the *Oregonian's* Duin finds incendiary:

- "We don't have a welcome mat set out for business."
- "There is basically no inventory of industrial land ... We turned a perfectly good rail yard into the Pearl District."
- "We chased off the forest products industry. We have trampled all over property rights."
- "My model of Oregon politics is that it's captive to two forces: the public employees union and the teachers union."

Not exactly barn-burning stuff, but if your consulting firm counts a number of government clients, and still you've had the guts to tell the truth about the state's underlying economic conditions, you just might find yourself on the fault line of Oregon politics. Not a very comfortable place to be.

First Lars Larson, then the governor's own economists. Who will be next?

Shh ... be quiet now.

*Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns; why should we let them have ideas?*

--- *Joseph Stalin*