

Corporate Media Consolidation and the Distortion of Democracy

Conversations with Mel Hurtig and Tracy Rosenberg. Global Research News Hour Episode 105

By [Michael Welch](#), [Mel Hurtig](#), and [Kéllia Ramares](#)

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[Media Disinformation](#)

“Five giant corporations control 90 percent of US mass media. And direct links connect all five of these media conglomerates to the political establishment and the economic and political power-elites of the United States.” [1] -Eric Sommer

“My own experience at competitive newspapers in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Toronto from the 1950s through the 1970s, and that of the majority of my colleagues, convinced us that competition was the sine qua non of a responsive and responsible press. And as competition lessened, more and more journalists found themselves muzzled.” -Peter Desbarats, of the University of Western Ontario. As quoted in The Truth about Canada [2]

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The planned merger between two of America’s largest media companies, Comcast Corp and Time-Warner Cable, [was successfully scuttled in April](#) when Comcast withdrew its acquisition bid.

Announced in February of 2014, the \$45.2 billion dollar deal was [running into opposition](#) from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as well as from public and consumer-advocacy groups and the broader public.

In a parallel development, across the border in Canada, the Competition Bureau of Canada, the country’s competition regulator, [gave the go-ahead for Canadian media-giant Postmedia Network Inc.](#) to purchase Quebecor’s Sun Media assets, including its 175 English language newspapers, at a cost of \$316 million dollars (Canadian).

The deal would leave both major dailies in four of Canada’s largest cities (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa) [owned and effectively controlled by the same company](#).

Yet, in a statement, John Pecman, Commissioner of Competition stated on the Bureau’s

website:

“...our review concluded that there would not be significant anti-competitive effects for readers or advertisers arising from the proposed transaction.” [3]

With more and more media services, which include internet providers and services, being targeted for acquisition by some of the world’s major profit-making and profit-driven operators, how significant are the concerns for freedom of expression and dialogue? What are the concerns for corporate and state control of the virtual town square, and what are the hazards for what’s left of our democracy? These are questions to be explored in this week’s Global Research News Hour.

In the first half hour, we hear some thoughts about the Canadian situation from **Mel Hurtig**. Mel Hurtig is a legendary Canadian Nationalist, publisher, bookseller, and creator of the Canadian Encyclopedia. He is an outspoken political activist, an Officer of the Order of Canada, and author of several books warning of threats to Canadian democracy including [Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids: The Tragedy and Disgrace of Poverty in Canada](#) (1999), [The Vanishing Country](#) (2002), [The Truth about Canada](#) (2008), and his most recent [The Arrogant Autocrat: Stephen Harper’s Take-over of Canada](#) (2015). Hurtig has written and spoken extensively about the unprecedented level of media concentration in Canada compared to other countries. In this recent interview, Hurtig brings listeners up to speed on how these media dynamics are intersecting with the designs of a very right wing Prime Minister.

In the second half hour, occasional contributor **Kellia Ramares-Watson** brings us a marvelous conversation with Tracy Rosenberg, executive director of the progressive media advocacy group Media Alliance. They explore the threats to democracy associated with huge media companies dominating the majority of what audiences see read and hear, the dangers associated with the vertical integration of private internet service providers with content providers, and the need for a ‘Global Public’ to counter the influence of globalized capital.

For this and other interviews from Kellia Ramares-Watson please visit her article and podcast page: <https://www.patreon.com/kellia?ty=c>

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[Port Perry Radio](#) in Port Perry, Ontario - Thursdays at 1pm ET

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Notes:

1. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/how-five-american-companies-control-what-you-think/5382407>
2. Mel Hurtig (2008), The Truth about Canada p.167
3. <http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/03898.html>

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