
II. The Cartel In Operation

A case study: The news media robbed American citizens of an election

by Dana S. Scanlon

The morning after the Feb. 24, 1996 Democratic Presidential primary in the state of Delaware, many Americans read in their local paper a national wire story by Associated Press's Wilmington correspondent, which reported that President Bill Clinton had "won the primary unopposed." Less than one week into the Presidential primary season, which opened officially with the New Hampshire election on Feb. 20, the Associated Press had already left its mark on what was to become the Big Lie of the campaign.

Not only was Lyndon LaRouche on the ballot in Delaware's primary, but he received nearly 10% of the vote. He campaigned in the state, and gave a press conference on Feb. 15, which AP chose not to attend.

After being contacted by a number of callers, AP eventually issued a correction to its story. Did the correction report the facts? Not at all. Once again, AP played fast and loose with reality, and reported simply that "Clinton had won the primary."

Weeks later, when LaRouche garnered 12.7% and 11.7% of the vote in Oklahoma and Louisiana, respectively, AP was at it again. "Clinton had won unopposed," it said. When a Washington, D.C.-based representative of AP was contacted about retracting this outright lie, he scoffed that the LaRouche vote was not significant, because there were indications that the Democratic National Committee would not recognize LaRouche as a legitimate candidate (a major story which should have been covered, in and of itself). Perhaps, he added, if LaRouche were to have received 55% of the vote, it would be worthy of coverage—but he wasn't even sure about that.

AP was not alone in perpetrating this Big Lie. The *Washington Post*, among other news organizations, also ignored the Delaware results, and lied about LaRouche's presence in all the primaries—except for perfunctory, after-the-fact mention of the local (Virginia, Maryland, and District of Columbia) races. LaRouche's March 12 results in Oklahoma and Louisiana were also deceitfully ignored, and readers were treated to the following analysis: "Clinton, facing no opposition in his party, was poised last night to clinch the Democratic

nomination mathematically."

News of LaRouche's more than 35% in North Dakota's Feb. 27, 1996 "beauty contest" (Clinton was not on the ballot) was also ignored, while readers were bored with such platitudes as: "While North and South Dakota had a longer history of primaries than Arizona, they drew relatively little attention from the candidates—in part because Dole was heavily favored."

Had the news media of a developing sector country, say, in Africa, committed such outrageous acts of political thuggery against a maverick candidate, and favoritism toward its establishment candidates, the stage would be set for another round of cries against "tin-horn dictators" controlling their nation's news media. Some outraged lawmakers would almost certainly call for financial assistance to be cut off against such a renegade nation, until it learned to accept the rules of the democratic process.

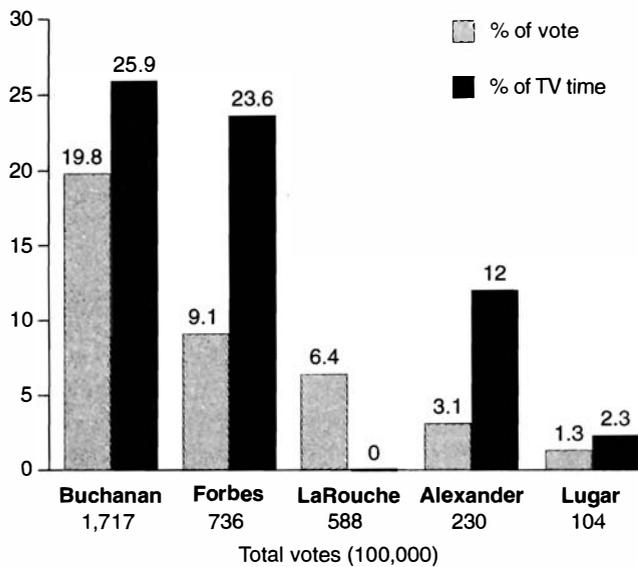
Yet, in the United States of America, such an act goes without notice.

The case of television

Despite the claims that Americans have grown cynical about their evening news programs, they remain overwhelmingly dependent on the national prime-time newscasts to tell them what to think. Although LaRouche was on the ballot in about half of the Democratic Party primaries, his name was not mentioned one single time on any of the network evening news shows. The content of those programs is controlled by the media cartel. **Figures 1 and 2** starkly show the extent to which the national networks attempt to influence the outcome of elections. The results are so striking that it is impossible not to conclude that when the media cartel decides to promote a candidate, such as the insignificant Lamar Alexander, the former governor of Tennessee, they bestow a disproportionately high amount of coverage on that candidate, trying to manipulate the outcome of the election. And conversely, when the same media want to crush a candidate, such as LaRouche, a complete blackout is imposed—evidence of popular support notwithstanding.

FIGURE 1

Voter preference vs. media preference in the Presidential primaries



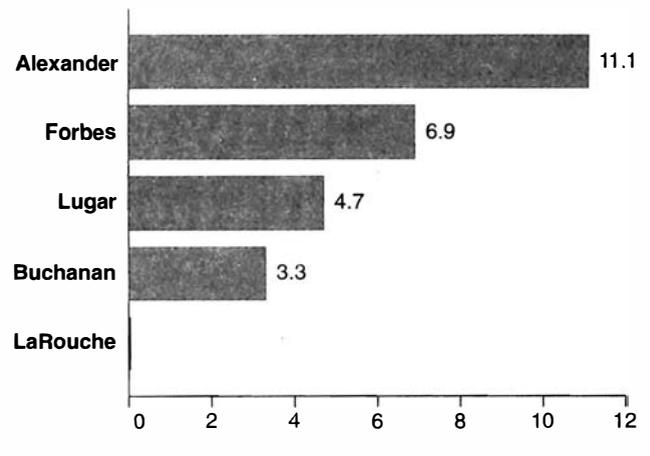
LaRouche's vote totals in Democratic Presidential primaries in states where funny business did not occur in the vote count, ran as high as 7 to 13%. The average, 6.5%, is shown in Figure 1. LaRouche received not a single second of coverage on the nightly newscasts of the Big Three networks (NBC, ABC, CBS) during the first four months of 1996, during which most of the primaries were concentrated, and for which data have been compiled for the other candidates. Compare for a moment LaRouche's "media preference" to that of Forbes and Alexander. Keeping in mind that with 6.5% of the vote LaRouche received no national TV coverage at all, Alexander, who received less than half of LaRouche's vote totals (3.1%), was given 12% of the total minutes of prime-time network coverage. Forbes, who received 9.2% of the vote, received 23.6% of total coverage.

When the data were compiled to show minutes of network TV coverage per 100,000 votes received (see Figure 2), the picture that emerged was worth a thousand words. Alexander tops them all as a media darling, with 11.1 minutes of free TV time for every 100,000 votes received. Forbes is also way up there, with 6.9 minutes, followed by Lugar, with 4.7, and Pat Buchanan, with 3.3. LaRouche comes in dead last, with 0.

According to data assembled by the Washington, D.C. Center for Media and Public Affairs, from Jan. 1 through the March 26 California primary, the Big Three networks broadcast 573 stories on the 1996 Presidential primaries. During that period, LaRouche was not mentioned in any of those stories, despite the fact that during that time frame he scored results that could only be described as "shocking"

FIGURE 2

Minutes of network TV coverage per 100,000 votes received



for a non-establishment candidate: 9.6% in Delaware, 34.5% in the North Dakota beauty contest, 12.7% in Oklahoma, 8.3% in Ohio, 7.6% in Mississippi, 11.7% in Louisiana, 11.2% in Colorado, and 7.0% in California.

Also not reflected in Figures 1 and 2 are the countless hours of coverage devoted to the candidates on "talking head" programs such as ABC's "Nightline," morning news shows such as "Good Morning America," and the Sunday morning interview shows such as "Meet the Press." None of these invited LaRouche to participate.

If "non-person LaRouche" received 6.5% of the vote on average in the primaries, what would he have garnered if his presence had simply been acknowledged by the media? His vote count could easily have doubled.

'Getting around' the FCC

In a rare admission, a top executive of national television programming matter of factly asserted in front of rolling cameras on May 23, 1996, that "getting around" the Federal Communications Commission's equal access provisions is a basic trick of the trade, when it comes to Presidential campaign coverage. The statement was made at a symposium at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the American University's School of Communication and the giant Denver-based cable TV company, Tele-Communications, Inc. (TCI).

The symposium, "New Media, Old Media and the Future of Campaign Television: What Next on the Free Air Time Issue?" was styled as a debate in which liberal and conservative views concerning the universally recognized inadequacy of campaign coverage would be aired. Only the repeated interventions of this author (also a representative of LaRouche's Presidential campaign committee) made it clear that the solutions envisaged by the panelists were premised on the corrupt

notion that the ladies and gentlemen of the news media, both so-called left-wing and right-wing, arrogate solely to themselves the right to determine which candidates the voting public shall be allowed to take seriously.

The proceedings revealed that, when they think they are among their own, leading members of the news media *acknowledge* their participation in a conspiracy to manipulate the political process and evade the laws of the FCC.

Throughout the proceedings, there was much self-serving congratulatory talk about the twin efforts of TCI News and former *Washington Post* political reporter Paul Taylor to launch the "free TV time" bandwagon. Taylor has been joined by former CBS national news anchor Walter Cronkite and former Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.), in the Free TV for Straight Talk Coalition, a group which has successfully persuaded the television networks to donate free air time to the "principal" candidates for President during prime time in the final months of the campaign. TCI News has been credited with being the first major news organization to do this, with its daily "Race for the Presidency" program. (Rupert Murdoch of Fox-TV was the first national network owner to agree to this the previous winter.) But the notion that now, with these initiatives, the problem has been "fixed," was exposed as a hypocritical sham during the symposium.

The most telling statement about how the "fix" will continue to exclude significant national candidates such as LaRouche, was by Robert Thomson, senior vice president of communications and policy planning for TCI, and its primary liaison on Capitol Hill.

Thomson described the efforts involved in getting Race for the Presidency off the ground, and in getting other cable stations to carry it. Race for the Presidency was even singled out by Vice President Al Gore as helping to "elevate the dialogue of democracy," with its showing of candidate videos. Thomson described the various FCC regulations and fairness laws that are on the books, and said that "in order to get around those laws, we had to style it as a news show even though we are really giving free air time."

"Styling" it as a news show meant that TCI News became exempt from having to offer the same time to *all* qualified candidates. In this particular case, and, *with the sole exception of Lyndon LaRouche*, TCI News provided free access to *every single major Republican and Democratic candidate*, and some not so major ones, including individuals with less than a snowball's chance in hell to obtain their party's nomination, such as Illinois businessman Morry Taylor, Jr.

Partners in crime

The TCI News editorial decision to exclude LaRouche from its "free TV time" offer was no isolated incident. Fox-TV, which made a much-publicized offer of air time to candidates last winter, asked the FCC to rule that its proposals would be exempted from the Communications Act fairness laws. In late August, the FCC did just that, in a unanimous 4-

0 ruling. Its actions in the weeks just prior to that ruling, however, demonstrated that having the FCC keep watch over the TV networks to enforce fairness in campaign coverage is like appointing a fox to guard the hen house.

The FCC made itself into a partner in crime with the television networks by intervening in summer 1996 to sabotage the LaRouche campaign committee's efforts to purchase television time in Pennsylvania, in order to air its hard-hitting exposé of Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge's killer budget-cuts. Weeks after numerous stations had agreed to air the ad, they began cancelling, citing a memo from the president of the Pennsylvania Broadcasters' Association, which was sent to all the electronic media in the state. The memo affirmed that they were under no obligation to sell air time to the LaRouche campaign because the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Donald Fowler, had declared that LaRouche was not a *bona fide* Democrat. The president of the Pennsylvania Broadcasters' Association produced a July 30, 1996 FCC ruling which argued that the stations did not have to air the LaRouche ads unless LaRouche could produce a document from Fowler certifying him as an authentic Democrat.

Serving as censors and king-makers is not the only function of the news media cartel's dictatorship. Many states, including Michigan, for example, use "coverage by the news media" as a standard for determining eligibility for ballot status in the primaries. Thus, the deliberate decision of America's news media to lie about LaRouche, making him a non-person, was used by the authorities in several states as the pretext to keep him off the ballot.

The power of AP

In his recent book, *The New News Media* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), former NBC news anchor John Chancellor described the power exerted by Associated Press over the flow of news to the American public:

"The AP and the other wire services are the great engines of newsgathering and distribution, at the center of the news business. 'The Wires,' they're called in newsroom shorthand. The AP wire provides both the text and the context of the news. Every daily news organization sorts and sifts the day's events to decide what will be published or broadcast, how much space or time it will get, and where it will be placed in relation to the rest of the news. The AP is central to the process of decision. . . . It is a non-profit organization, owned by the U.S. newspapers it serves. They aren't customers, they are members, served by a staff of more than 3,100."