

**Censored 2006**

*by Peter Phillips and Project Censored*  
*NY, London, Melbourne, Toronto: Seven Stories Press, 2005, 432pp. US \$18.95.*

There is increasing convergence of ownership of the media by a few select individuals, such as Rupert Murdoch. It is argued that in the age of neo-liberal globalisation these media barons continually push the notion that the market should not be shackled by the government. Furthermore, the mainstream media were/are keen supporters of the war in Iraq. As the name implies, *Censored 2006* attempts to shed light on the twenty-five most censored (most important, but least widely reported) new stories by the mainstream media, such as the coverage on what is actually happening in Iraq, the plight of Palestinian child detainees in Israeli prisons, and the US media's distorted coverage of the 2004 US Presidential election. In addition, the book has chapters on everything from the unanswered questions of 9/11 to the most frivolous yet excessively covered stories (think the Jennifer Anniston-Brad Pitt divorce).

The book is the brainchild of *Project Censored*, which is "... an investigative sociology and media analysis project [at Sonoma State University] dedicated to journalistic integrity and the freedom of information throughout the United States", (p.17). That there is such a project and a resultant book is something that should be lauded. Indeed, some of the entries are superb. For example, the claim that the US is only threatening Iran due to Iran's attempt to sell oil for Euros instead of US dollars is interesting and excellently argued and researched. However, one must question what constitutes a censored story. As noted in the book, some of the 'censored' stories have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Observer* (UK), *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. Now, one may argue that the media did not devote enough attention to these stories, but these are mainstream publications. Moreover, one of the censored stories is the claim that rich countries are failing to live up to aid promises. This is hardly a censored story as it has been reported widely in the media. Certainly it may not have been reported in the US media, but the Australian media have devoted coverage to this issue. Nevertheless, overall the section on the censored stories is, for the most part, informative and interesting.

The chapters on media issues by a number of individuals, however, leave a lot to be desired. This is not to argue that some of the entries are not very informative. The timeline on the warnings of a potential Al-Qaeda attack on the US before 9/11 is breathtaking. It clearly

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demonstrates that the US government can not plausibly claim that it was not forewarned of such an attack by intelligence agencies. Unfortunately, not all entries come close to this. Indeed, some are downright ludicrous; John Massen claims that the Democratic Party, together with the media, was complicit in covering up the fact that Bush and Cheney allowed the terrorist attacks on 9/11. He makes this claim almost primarily on the fact that he sent a report on the complicity of Bush and Cheney to all Democrats in the US House of Representative and Senate, which they all promptly ignored. Another pointless chapter is 'Media Democracy in Action' which consists of small puff pieces written by students and Project Censored interns on their trip to the National Media Conference for Media Reform in 2005. One of the 'informative' entries noted that on the night before the conference

My roommate Joni and I giggled and chatted well into the early morning, much too excited to sleep. It was all I could do to stay in bed. I was going to be interviewing people [at the conference] who had been making change, real change in the world and I was part of that. I felt I was the luckiest girl in the world (p. 266).

How exciting!!! Sarcasm aside, such things belong in Internet blogs (then again, probably not even there) not in academia.

Overall, the 25 most censored stories and some of the stand-alone chapters deserve to be widely read and reported. Who is reading these stories, however, is the issue. For the most part I was aware of them, as I am sure most people in the academic left are. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the general public know about these stories, thus these stories combined in 1 book is a great idea. However, like most academic books, it is unlikely this book is being read in great numbers by the public. As such, the censored stories are still not widely reported.

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