


P.A.C O'Connor	Introduction to Journalism		
WEEK 6	THE BOSS: PRESS LORDS, REAL AND IMAGINED (& SOME OF THEIR EDITORS)		
			
Rupert Keith Murdoch, b.1931. Owner: News Corporation	Conrad Black, Lord Black of Crossharbour, b.1944. Owner: Hollinger International	Katherine Graham (1917-2001) & Ben Bradlee, editor of <i>The Washington Post</i>	
		William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951)	

1. PRESS LORDS are the dinosaurs of the media - almost: just when you think they're extinct, another one pops up somewhere and starts taking on the world. These days the people who own newspapers and employ journalists are most often ordinary board members of multinational conglomerates which owns large and varied slabs of the media pie. The press lord who owns a string of newspapers may seem powerful and larger than life but he or she is unlikely to occupy a position in 'big media'. Alone among the press lords we'll discuss this week, Rupert Murdoch and News Corporation belong to the top tier. Of the rest only William Randolph Hearst was, in his day, of any real significance: today he is remembered mainly for his fictional portrayal in one of the most extraordinary films ever made, and for his resemblance to his heir, the Kane of our day, Rupert Murdoch.

Are 'press lords' necessary? Not really. Someone has to hold a media corporation together, give it a direction and maximise its impact on the national or international 'conversation'. The traditional press lord will be driven to this sort of activity but a capable board of directors can do it just as well and make the newspaper less dependent on one personality. In any case, whether a media title is owned by a multinational conglomerate and its shareholders or a cigar-chomping press magnate, they need people to deal with the news and work towards the overview that makes their media product stand out from the rest: they need an editor, and they need journalists.

The editor will choose the front page lead, hire the journalists and star columnists, argue with the board and sometimes face down the owner. Like press owners, editors are a peculiar breed. Neither the owner nor the editor need high moral qualities or an elevated vision of humanity but they do need each other, and this is the root cause of some of the most intense relationships in the commercial world.

The Australian journalist John Pilger explores some of these relationships in this documentary about *The Daily Mirror*, its circulation war with Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* and its time under another bizarre media mogul, Robert 'Captain Bob' Maxwell. Here, in essence, is the story of the postwar British press: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5005752483917353600&q=Murdoch+Wapping>

BIG MEDIA: THE TOP TIERS OF GLOBAL MEDIA OWNERSHIP

2. Today's global media is dominated by a 1st tier of about eight companies, currently including AOL-Time Warner, which owns CNN and Britain's IPC media group, Disney, which owns ABC, Bertelsmann, initially a German media power, an increasingly significant player in US book and magazine publishing, Viacom, which owns CBS, General Electric, Sony, Seagram, and News Corporation, and a 2nd tier of 30-40 companies. Despite legislation, cross-ownership of media (newspapers owning or owned by TV stations owning/owned by film companies, advertising agencies, internet media and so on) is on the up because governments need friendly media or because all media corporations are multinational, which makes them much harder to control.

Most of the big players in both tiers (the top 8 and the next 36 or so) are from the USA and Europe, with a few from Asia and Latin America. Most are multinational but work out of national or regional strongholds, with flagship media titles in different countries.

All the first tier firms are actively engaged in equity joint ventures or other form of partnership with their competitors. Each of the first-tier media giants has joint ventures with, on average, two-thirds of the other first-tier media giants. Big media companies tend to build up strong holdings in global niche markets where connections and market share allow them to gobble up, undercut or out-perform the competition.

Today, six corporations control over 50% of all US media enterprises: books, magazines, newspapers, music, motion pictures, radio and television. About 77% percent of US daily newspapers belong to publishing chains. Two firms control more than half the market for 11,000 magazines. Four firms control major broadcast TV networks. In US radio, twenty-five groups control one quarter of the stations and generate 57% of the revenue.

Most of the world's film production, TV show production, cable channel ownership, cable and satellite system ownership, book publishing, magazine publishing and music production is controlled by these 50-odd corporations, with the first tier firms dominating most sectors.

The domination of the first tier companies can be judged from the fact that Aol Time Warner's sales revenue is nearly 50 times that of the firms at the bottom of the second tier. Thus the global media industry has taken the form of a monopolistic oligopoly.

Driven by globalization and synergy, an unremitting appetite for content and the emergence and growth of a vast, 24/7 internet driven media stream, this concentration of media interests is essentially an Anglo-Euro-American phenomenon.

In Asia, a few Japanese corporations belong in the 1st tier, but despite or because of huge daily circulation figures, Japanese newspapers have been slow to move out of paper publication. In China, a long-running battle between the media and the state has yet to be resolved. Meanwhile, the media of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh barely raise a blip on the global media screen, but their vast populations and increasing literacy make change inevitable.



3. Meet Rupert Murdoch. Here's Rupert in the 1960s, shaking up the British press, on the left. And on the right, here he is again, now in his 70s, with wife no.3, former 'hand model' Wendi Deng.

Few journalists have a good word for Rupert Murdoch, which is odd since his £30bn global media empire employs so many.



In 1994, BBC interviewed the terminally ill playwright Dennis Potter. Discussing his illness, Potter said, "I call my cancer Rupert. Because that man Murdoch is the one who, if I had the time (I've got too much writing to do)... I would shoot the bugger if I could. There is no one person more responsible for the pollution of what was already a fairly polluted press."

Like Potter, Murdoch's critics see him as a negative, dumbing influence, replacing quality entertainment and journalism with mindless vulgarity: *The Sun*'s Page Three, BSkyB satellite TV, and servile news channels like Fox TV. They see him as a political wheeler-dealer, tying governments to his own interests in return for friendly media legislation. Murdoch himself is frank about his attempts to influence political outcomes, for example his support for the Iraq War:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOcrwLEzNt0&mode=related&search=>

First moves Rupert was 22 when his father Keith, already a significant newspaper man in Australia, died and Rupert took charge of the unglamorous *Adelaide News*, turning it round and beginning his spectacular rise, expanding from newspapers to TV and magazines. Along the way he developed a pugnacious, in-your-face, populist style that belied his elite background. Accused of peddling 'sleaze', he responded: "I'm rather sick of snobs who tell us they're bad papers, snobs who only read papers that no-one else wants."

Back to Britain

In 1968 Murdoch bought London's *News of the World*, the newspaper which brought you, "I made my excuses and left". Soon he added *The Sun*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* to his stable, with *The Sun* introducing the infamous Page Three girl, headlines such as the 1982 Falklands war "Gotcha!" on the Sinking of the Argentinean troopship *General Belgrano*. Soon the comparisons began to be made with Orson Welles' monstrous creation, Charles Foster Kane (aka William Randolph Hearst), especially Kane's quip: "If the headline is big enough, it makes the news big enough."

In the US.

Moving to New York in the 1970s, Murdoch bought and revitalized *The New York Post* and *New York* magazine. The US States became a happy hunting ground, to such an extent that Murdoch took US citizenship in 1985 to comply with media ownership laws. He bought Twentieth Century Fox and the Fox television network: this brought him *The Simpsons* and the vast profits of the feature film, *Titanic*, as well as the media power of Fox News.

Wapping

In the 1980s Murdoch moved all his British media out of the print unions' stronghold in Fleet Street and re-located to Wapping in London's East End. Refusing to recognise the unions, he sacked 5000 in a bloody, year-long battle. His shoestring-budget newspaper empire enabled him to buy and subsidize a satellite TV loss maker, Sky Television, for which he bought the exclusive rights to Premiership

football. Now, to watch your favourite team, you either had to go to the match or watch it on Sky.

Murdoch and the Net

Murdoch got into the internet on the tail end of the .com boom, just as the smart money left town. In 2006, he announced that News Corporation was looking for a way to enter Chinese internet space without running into political obstacles of the type faced by Google, which agreed to self-censor its content, and Yahoo, which gave the Chinese government information about the site's users. In May 2007, he launched a Chinese version of MySpace, the world's most popular online social network, as a separate Chinese business. MySpace China is a 'locally owned, operated and managed company' in which News Corp is only one among several investors, according to its chief executive, Luo Chuan, the former head of Microsoft's MSN China. He said: 'Our team here will have the sole right to decide the operation model, the technology platform as well as the product strategy. It's very unlike the other multinationals you might have heard about or seen in the Chinese market.' Some campaigners fear that the site will provide a means for China's army of internet police to gather information on users.

Meet Kelvin MacKenzie Murdoch's greatest editor: (b. 1946) who ran *The Sun* from 1981 to 1993, lifting its readership to 12 million at one point. Here he is, going through some Sun copy in the early eighties:



Picking up a page he would run his eye over it, ringing paragraphs with his fat green pen. "That's crap! he would spit. ... The muttering would continue as he dotted about. "Bollocks ... **ing useless ... Yeah, that's OK ... Yeah, I like that ... Naaah ... That's bollocks. The criticism would become more detailed: "Put something in here about how his father was a bastard to him, or something like, will you?" he would say as he studied a profile of some celebrity.**

In news conferences he would be even more forthright, dismissing stories with the phrase, "I wouldn't wipe my **se with it' before 'turning round, sticking out his fat backside and miming pulling down his trousers before simulating the sanitary act with the offending piece of paper.'"*

*Peter Chippendale and Chris Horrie, *Stick it up your Punter* (Heinemann, 1990).

On April 15 1989, 96 football fans were crushed to death at the Hillsborough Stadium in Liverpool. Reporting the tragedy, *The Sun* alleged that Liverpool fans had urinated on the bodies and rifled the pockets of the victims. This provoked a furious reaction in Liverpool and a boycott on the newspaper there which The Sun has yet to live down. Here is MacKenzie refusing to apologise on the BBC programme *Newsnight*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3r2OGq0qtI> MacKenzie became a liability to Murdoch when he became part of the story. Perhaps jumping before he was pushed, in 1993 MacKenzie left Murdoch's News Corporation for a new career in satellite TV.



4. ONE FROM THE 'B' TEAM: CONRAD BLACK

Born: Montreal, 1944, into a wealthy family.

Early career: Trained as a lawyer until, aged 25, he bought *The Sherbrooke Record*, a small Canadian paper, with his business partner David Radler, now the government's star witness. He gradually increased holdings in newspapers (at one point owning 60 of Canada's 105 dailies) and also mining.

Marriages: In 1977, to Shirley Walters, who changed her name to Joanna, "at her husband's request", according to Bower: two sons, one daughter; marriage ended in divorce. Then in 1992 to Barbara Amiel, a rightwing journalist. "I knew what I wanted," she had written earlier. "To be dropped at Selfridges or Harrods to pick up fresh salmon and search for quails' eggs."

Rise to fame: His Hollinger International group bought into the British *Telegraph* group in the mid-1980s, making the new chairman a fixture in London high society, and breathing life into an ailing paper. In 1998 he launched the right-of-centre National Post, which had the side-effect of forcing up journalistic standards in Canada.

Becoming a peer: Black renounced Canadian citizenship in 2001 after a dispute with Jean Chrétien, the prime minister. He is understood now to be seeking to regain Canadian citizenship.

Criminal charges: Black is accused of fraud and obstruction of justice. He and three other ex-Hollinger executives are accused of taking \$60m in phoney tax-free bonuses. Black is also accused of misuse of company expenses. Hollinger International is also suing Black for \$200m (£100m), while Black is promising numerous libel suits.

Agenda: Black and Hollinger Inc. took an overtly far-right wing editorial stance. Black used his media to advance strident foreign and domestic policy objectives. To illustrate, Hollinger's senior international advisors as of 2000 included a former secretary general of NATO, a former president of France, Margaret Thatcher and two of the oldest and most hawkish of U.S. foreign policy-makers, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger. Richard Perle also became a board member. All have now stepped down. Here's one report: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcpiakV6Kdw>

The Guardian: Saturday May 19, 2007

[The Guardian](#)

The former media mogul Conrad Black has a broad face, as impervious as an Easter Island monolith and nearly as motionless; he expresses himself by tiny adjustments in the narrowness of his eyes, which are narrow to begin with. In court in Chicago, where he is facing up to 101 years in prison for fraud, he assumes a detached, sceptical air, as if the trial were mildly amusing, and happening to someone else. Occasionally, when a former friend enters the witness box to testify against him, he flashes an icy glare. Then there's his third expression - a feline look of pleasure, eyes almost closed - which is rarely seen these days, but which will return, presumably, should he be acquitted of all charges.

Black, 62, considers this outcome a near-certainty, since the case against him is "bullshit". It is also a "joke", an "outrage" and a "complete fraud"; the idea that he and his wife, Barbara Amiel, enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle is "complete and total rubbish". The prosecution, he explains, are "suffering mood fluctuations" as it dawns that they are heading for "a complete wipeout".

One day last week, proceedings turned to the now infamous \$62,000 bill for Amiel's 60th birthday party, at the New York restaurant *La Grenouille* in 2000. As Amiel and her stepdaughter

Alana watched from the public benches, the jury absorbed every detail of the event, projected on to a large screen: the \$13,000 spent on wine; the \$320 bottles of Dom Pérignon; the Beluga caviar, and the guest list featuring Donald Trump, Tina Brown, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, Henry Kissinger, Richard Perle and, incongruously, Barry Humphries. Black is accused of illegally using money from his company, Hollinger International, to pay for most of the party, along with various private jet flights, and refurbishment of the couple's New York flat. But the meat of the trial concerns \$60m that he and three co-defendants allegedly skimmed from sales of various Hollinger newspaper companies, under the guise of "non-compete" agreements.

EDITED *The Washington Post* when it led with the exposure of the Nixon White House during the years of the Watergate affair. Here's how Katherine Graham recalled the beginnings of the scandal in her memoirs: You'll notice here her cautious but determined approach to the unfolding scandal, and her unwillingness to be seen as in any way central to events.



“On Saturday morning, June 17, 1972, Howard Simons, The Post's managing editor ...related the fantastic story that five men wearing surgical gloves had been caught breaking into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate office building.

President Nixon was in Key Biscayne, Fla., at the time. His press secretary, Ron Ziegler, dismissed the incident as “a third-rate burglary attempt,” adding, “Certain elements may try to stretch this beyond what it is.” None of us, of course, had any idea how far the story would stretch; the beginning – once the laughter died down – all seemed so farcical.

The story of the break-in appeared on the front page of Sunday's paper. Among the staff writers contributing to the story were Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. This was the beginning of their famous collaboration. Their first big story, over a month later, revealed the connection of the burglars to the Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP).

The Post was ahead on the story from the beginning. And from the beginning, Nixon began making threats of economic retaliation against the paper. “The Post is going to have damnable, damnable problems out of this one. They have a television station . . . and they're going to have to get it renewed. . . . [T]he game has to be played awfully rough.” Of our lawyer, Nixon said, “I wouldn't want to be in Edward Bennett Williams's position after this election. We are going to fix the son of a bitch, believe me.”

Two weeks later, a seminal Bernstein and Woodward article appeared on Page 1 of The Post. They had dug up information that there was a secret fund at CRP that was controlled by five people, one of whom was then-Attorney General John Mitchell, and which was to be used to gather intelligence on the Democrats. Thus the story reached a new level.

In an effort to check it out, Bernstein called Mitchell directly, reaching him at a hotel in New York, where Mitchell answered the phone himself. When Carl told him about the story, Mitchell exploded with an exclamation of “JEEEEEEESUS,” so violent that Carl felt it was “some sort of primal scream” and thought Mitchell might die on the telephone. After he'd read him the first two paragraphs, Mitchell interrupted, still screaming, “All that crap, you're putting it in the paper? It's all been denied. Katie Graham's gonna get her tit caught in a big fat wringer if that's published. Good

Christ! That's the most sickening thing I ever heard."

Bernstein was stunned and called Ben Bradlee at home to read him Mitchell's quotes. Ben told Carl to use it all except the specific reference to my "tit." The quote was changed to read that I was "gonna get caught in a big fat wringer." Ben decided he didn't have to forewarn me. (Later he told me, "That was too good to check with you, Katharine." I would have agreed with Ben's decision.) As it was, I was shocked to read what I did in the paper, but even more so to hear what Mitchell had actually said, so personal and offensive were the threat and the message.

It was quite a temper tantrum on Mitchell's part – and especially strange of him to call me Katie, which no one has ever called me. Bob Woodward later observed that the interesting thing for him was that Mitchell's remark was an example of the misperception on the part of the Nixon people that I was calling all the shots. In any case, the remark lived on in the annals of Watergate and was one of the principal public links of me with the affair."



Beginning in 1919, William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951)

built this memorial to his power and wealth, "Hearst Castle", on a 240,000 acre site at San Simeon, California. At the height of his influence, Hearst owned 28 major newspapers, 18 magazines, as well as several radio stations and movie companies. Badly hit by the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, he began to lose personal control of his media empire in the 1940s.

Hearst was the only child of George Hearst, a self-made multimillionaire miner and rancher, and his wife Phoebe. In 1887, George Hearst won the *San Francisco Examiner* as payment for a gambling debt and promptly handed it over to William, then aged

23. The paper became the first in the pile of titles that made Hearst's fortune. As he would do with all his newspapers, Hearst turned the *Examiner* into a vehicle for outrageous investigative reporting and sensationalism, taking on the greatest journalists and writers of the day, among them Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, Ambrose Bierce, and Jack London. From 1903-07, Hearst was a member of the US House of Representatives as the Congressman for New York. In 1906, he tried and failed to become Governor of New York. In the 1930s, Hearst supported the Nazis and advocated accommodation with them. In the 1940s, though without a strong forum for his views, he became fiercely anti-communist.

Hearst was always quick to spot the potential of a new medium. In the 1920s, he was one of the first US media men to invest in the infant medium of radio, just as in the 1940s he was an early enthusiast for television (though he died too soon to capitalize on his foresight). His *Hearst Metrotone News* pioneered the cinema newsreel. Another Hearst company, *King Features Syndicate*, is still the world's largest distributor of comics and short text features (*Popeye*, *Ripley's Believe it or Not*). Hearst held considerable sway in Hollywood and made over 100 films including *The Perils of Pauline*, *The Exploits of Elaine* and *The Mysteries of Myra*: all of them vehicles for his partner from the late 1920s, the actress Marion Davies (1897–1961).

Given Hearst's power and influence, it is remarkable that Orson Welles' masterpiece, *Citizen Kane*, ever got made, let alone released. Certainly, Hearst did everything he could to prevent its release and distribution, but Welles and his studio, RKO, resisted. Hearst's reaction was

understandable. In a situation replicated in the film, Hearst's *New York Journal* campaigned hard to liberate Cuba from Spanish rule. Hearst showed images of Cubans herded into concentration camps by Spanish troops. The term 'yellow journalism', was coined to describe Hearst's ruthless sensationalism. When one of his photographers objected to warmongering tone of the *New York Journal*, Hearst is said to have told him "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war". Here's the scene in *Citizen Kane*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzhh3U2cONs>