



## The Center for Media and Democracy strengthens participatory democracy by investigating and exposing public relations spin and propaganda, and by promoting media literacy and citizen journalism.

CMD provides in-depth reporting on PRWatch.org about corporate spin, government propaganda and the role of PR firms in polluting our information environment. On our SourceWatch.org site, we provide a platform for collaborative research and reporting on the individuals, organizations, and issues shaping the public agenda. Following are highlights from the first four months of 2007.



### *SourceWatch Wins Golden Dot Award*

CMD's wiki-based collaborative on-line encyclopedia of people, organizations, and issues shaping the public agenda, SourceWatch, was awarded the Golden Dot award by the Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet

for "Best Blog: Issues and Advocacy." The Golden Dot Awards recognizes "outstanding achievement in the use of the Internet to influence the political process."

### *Keeping the Heat on Pay for Plug*

CMD Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta wrote a follow-up to the Federal Communications Commission investigation into the paying of pundit Armstrong Williams to flack for the US government, notably to sing the praises of the No Child Left Behind Act. The investigation has been languishing, and Representative John Dingell (D-Mich.) pointedly questioned Federal Communications Commission Chair Kevin Martin in March about the status of the agency's ongoing investigation. You can read Diane's article in its entirety at: [www.prwatch.org/node/5902](http://www.prwatch.org/node/5902)

### *The Politics of Food*

CMD Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson interviewed Michele Simon about her book, *Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines our Health and How to Fight Back*. Simon has many insights into the efforts of corporations to play the role of "good citizen" while simultaneously trying to avoid any kind of meaningful regulation: She realized there was "this hypocrisy going on, where on

one hand the major food companies were claiming to be part of the solution, claiming to change their ways, while on the other, there was this on the ground reality in which the food companies were conducting business as usual and lobbying against common sense policies to improve public health." Go to [www.prwatch.org/node/5803](http://www.prwatch.org/node/5803) to read the whole interview.



### *Smoking Out an Independent Judiciary*

CMD TobaccoWiki Editor Anne Landman dug deep into the available Big Tobacco documents because the current situation with US Attorneys being pressured to prosecute or not rang a few bells. It turns out that in 2000, when President Bush was Governor of Texas, his close advisor Karl Rove tried to prevent the Texas Attorney General from filing suit against major US tobacco companies. More recently, Sharon Eubanks, the leader of the Department of Justice team that prosecuted landmark cases against Big Tobacco, has reported that the Bush administration's political appointees tried to squelch their efforts at every step. Anne's two articles on these issues are available at [www.prwatch.org/node/5914](http://www.prwatch.org/node/5914) and [www.prwatch.org/node/5889](http://www.prwatch.org/node/5889)



### *Media Distortion of Science*

CMD Research Director Sheldon Rampton was one of four panelists to address the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Science and Technology at a March 28, 2007, hearing titled "Shaping the Message, Distorting the Science: Media Strategies to Influence Science Policy." Other hearing witnesses included Dr. James J. McCarthy, the Alexander Agassiz Professor of Biological Oceanography at Harvard and a board member of the Union of Concerned Scientists, and Tarrek Maassarani of the Government Accountability Project. To read Sheldon's complete testimony and for a link to the webcast, visit [www.prwatch.org/node/5899](http://www.prwatch.org/node/5899)

### *Nukes Again Gaining Popularity*

Diane Farsetta wrote an in-depth article about the resurgence of nuclear energy as a supposed clean, green, and safe energy source. What role have PR firms and their astroturf groups masquerading as genuine citizens' groups played? Read "Moore Spin: Or, How Reporters Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Nuclear Front Groups," for more information. It is available at [www.prwatch.org/node/5833](http://www.prwatch.org/node/5833) (Thanks to Greenpeace International for use of this image)



## CMD In the News

• CMD Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta was a guest on Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting's (FAIR's) weekly radio program Counterspin on March 23, 2007. "The growing media popularity of nuclear power as a solution to global warming and energy woes is not about the environment," she said, "but the result of a well-funded and stealthy corporate campaign to promote the flagging US nuclear energy industry." To listen to the whole interview, visit [www.fair.org/index.php?page=3065](http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3065)

• George Kenney of Electric Politics called CMD for his March 30, 2007, podcast: "To get a sense of what's going on from the perspective of grassroots Wisconsin — historically one of the great incubators of American political thought — I turned to John Stauber of the Center for Media and Democracy, out of Madison. John's a great guy, very thoughtful, possessing an abundance of Midwestern common sense. An excellent, and necessary, reality corrective for the Washington perspective." You can hear the whole interview by visiting [www.electricpolitics.com/media/mp3/EP2007.03.30.mp3](http://www.electricpolitics.com/media/mp3/EP2007.03.30.mp3)

• SourceWatch Editor Bob Burton was part of an April 4, 2007, panel discussion on ABC Radio 612 in Brisbane Australia. Part of Madonna King's Mornings program. they discussed a wide range of topics, including "clean coal," mining, BP's global re-branding project, the definition of greenwashing and what individuals can do about it.

• Are you one of the more than 275,000 people who have watched our four minute video about Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber's book *The Best War Ever*? If not (or if you just want to see it again), go to [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) and search for "The Best War Ever."

## CMD Forms Coalition to Protect Journalist



On January 24, 2007, the Center for Media and Democracy announced the launch of Defend The Press, a new coalition of journalists, public interest groups, academics and citizen activists. The campaign's goal was to pressure the US Army to drop its subpoena of Sarah Olson (pictured left), an independent print and radio journalist, in the court martial of Iraq war resister Lieutenant Ehren Watada. Olson interviewed Watada in May 2006, and in June he announced he would not go to war in Iraq, challenging its legality. The subpoena against Olson stated "failure to appear may result in your being taken into custody and brought before the court martial."

Olson wrote in an editorial column, "I stand firmly by a conviction I share with many: a member of the press should never be placed in the position of aiding a government prosecution of political speech. This goes against the grain of even the most basic understanding of the First Amendment—free press guarantees and the expectation of a democracy that relies on a free flow of information and perspectives without fear of censure or retribution." On January 29—just six days after the public launch of the Defend the Press campaign—the U.S. military agreed to drop two charges that carried a maximum of two years in prison against Watada. As part of the agreement, Sarah Olson and fellow reporter Gregg Kakesako did not have to testify.

For more information on this campaign, visit [www.DefendThePress.org](http://www.DefendThePress.org)

## Open Mouth, Insert Foot . . .



As reported in *Science* magazine, "A group of big scientific publishers has hired" aggressive public relations executive Eric Dezenhall "to take on the free-information movement. Some traditional journals ... say that open-access journals and public databases ... threaten their livelihoods." In emails Dezenhall suggested that the publishers claim that "public access equals government censorship" and "equate traditional publishing models with peer review." In another email, Wiley's director of corporate communications said Dezenhall told the publishers they "had acted too defensively" and "worried too much about making precise statements."



The *Miami Herald* on March 10, 2007, reported that while fleeing an ambush in Afghanistan, U.S. soldiers reportedly opened fire on civilian cars and pedestrians and then destroyed photos and

video taken at the scene by freelance journalists. Destroying the evidence was necessary, a military official explained later, to protect "investigative integrity" because photos or video taken by "untrained people" might "capture visual details that are not as they originally were."



Kevin Foley, of the PR firm KEF Media Associates, wrote to the FCC that CMD's complaints against undisclosed use of video news releases should not be taken seriously since we were, shockingly, "enjoying [our]selves" at the "expense of companies like [his]." The reason? CMD had awarded the National Association of Broadcast Communicators, the front group for the VNR industry, the coveted Silver Falsie Award for 2006. The award was shared with the Radio-Television News Directors Association. All the Falsies winners can be seen at [www.prwatch.org/falsies2006](http://www.prwatch.org/falsies2006)

## Mark Your Calendar ...

For the most current information on upcoming events featuring CMD, visit [www.PRWatch.org/event](http://www.PRWatch.org/event)

• “Twenty Years of Propaganda?” Conference: May 15–17, 2007, University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. CMD Research Director Sheldon Rampton will present on “Breaking the Frame: How New Media are Changing the Propaganda Model.”

For more information, visit [www.uwindsor.ca/propaganda](http://www.uwindsor.ca/propaganda)

• CMD Executive Director John Stauber will be touring Europe to promote the publication of *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You* in German. From May 3–14, 2007, he will be visiting Frankfurt, Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Freiburg, Nuremberg, Heidelberg, Cologne, Vienna, and Brussels. If you would like specifics on his tour, contact CMD at [editor@prwatch.org](mailto:editor@prwatch.org) or at 608-260-9713.

• The Z Media Institute is June 4–12, 2007 in Woods Hole, MA. CMD Senior Researcher Diane Farsetta will be presenting on “Media Self-Defense: How to Win Against Spin” during the first few days of the session. For more information, visit: [www.zmag.org/aboutzmi.htm](http://www.zmag.org/aboutzmi.htm)

## About PR Watch

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## Profile: Patricia Barden

CMD IT Director Patricia Barden began work with us in June 2005. Tricia received her bachelor's degree in Information Systems from the University of Richmond (VA). She has been invaluable as CMD has used technology and the Web in more and more significant ways. For example, the release of our two-multimedia reports on Fake News would not have been possible without Tricia's web savvy. She was also critical in the launch of the Congresspedia program as part of SourceWatch. She is currently working on revamping the PRWatch.org website, and developed the brand new CMD logo that you see featured in this issue of PR Watch.



Tricia is a dedicated member of the open source software community, and is committed to providing support to small non-profits as they navigate the world of technology. This has provided her the opportunity to bring together her activism and professional skills.



In her life outside of CMD, Tricia is the proud mother of Laura and Jordan and shares her life with her Jack

Russell terrier, Dixie Doodle. Tricia is an avid bike rider, birdwatcher, and guitar player. She dances every Monday night with the Dairyland Cowboys and Cowgirls.

## Show Your Support of CMD: Help Us Fly!

Since its founding in 1993, the Center for Media and Democracy has been holding down the fort in Madison, WI. It gives us a unique perspective and allows us to bring “Midwestern common sense” to our work, but it also means that to attend most conferences, or to meet with many of our supporters, prospective donors, and colleagues, we need to hit the road, or the tarmac. And to bring all of our staff together, it means bringing people from DC, Colorado, and even Australia.

In 2006, CMD spent nearly \$20,000 on airfare related to book promotion, conference attendance, research, press events, meetings and fundraising. Can you help us out? If you have some **spare frequent flyer miles** and would be willing to purchase an airline ticket on behalf of a CMD staffer, please contact Associate Director Judith Siers-Poisson at [judith@prwatch.org](mailto:judith@prwatch.org), or call her at 608-260-9713. Your help would be greatly appreciated!

“CMD rocks the free world. The work they are doing exposing the PR industry and battling fake news is indispensable. I do not know what we would do without them.”

—Bob McChesney,  
Co-Founder of Free Press

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Address Correction Requested

**The New PR Watch**  
Easy to read and full of information  
about the work of the Center for  
Media and Democracy to research and  
report on government propaganda,  
corporate spin, and the pollution  
of our information environment!

## The New PR Watch

Dear reader,

You're holding in your hands the new *PR Watch!* Fourteen years after the launch of our then-quarterly newsmagazine, we're making the first major revisions to it. You might say that *PR Watch* has finally entered the information age of the 21st century.

When we began *PR Watch* in 1993, we were reaching at most a couple thousand people through our mailed publication. Today, we reach millions of people a year via our two websites: [www.PRWatch.org](http://www.PRWatch.org) and [www.SourceWatch.org](http://www.SourceWatch.org). The Internet changed everything, and now that revolution has prompted us to use *PR Watch* to highlight our innovative online investigative reporting.

In return for your support, you'll be receiving the print edition of *PR Watch* about every other month. Our Associate Director, Judith Siers-Poisson, will be editing it to be leaner, more interesting, and easier to read. Issues will be more frequent and while they will have fewer pages per issue, they will convey and direct you to more information on our websites. Because most of our reporting is now online, it only made sense to revamp

*PR Watch* to reflect this change. Think of the new *PR Watch* as a snazzy guide to our online reporting — *PR Watch 2.0* if you will!

In this inaugural issue you'll also notice our new logo. We thank designer Jeanne Gomoll and our IT Director Patricia Barden for it. As

always, we are holding a magnifying glass to the schemes of the multi-billion dollar PR and propaganda industry.

We think you'll like this new and improved *PR Watch*. We're doing more and better reporting than ever, and now our print publication *PR Watch* is re-designed to reflect this reality and direct you to it on our websites. Please let us know your thoughts, and give us your feedback and suggestions. We want to keep tweaking *PR Watch* to make it ever-better.

John Stauber, founder,  
*PR Watch* and the Center for Media and Democracy



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