

(This statement was read by Scott Sanders at the April 2, 2003 Federal Communications Commission hearing on media ownership held in Chicago, Illinois. The event was sponsored by the Northwestern University School of Law, and held in its Lincoln Hall. Present was F.C.C. Commissioner Michael Copps.)

“I’d like to speak about access and public broadcasting. My name is Scott Sanders. I’m here today as a member of Chicago Media Action and Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting. Thank you Commissioner Copps for your support of public hearings like this.

It is patently obvious that media consolidation is decreasing access to the public’s airwaves. The diverse voices of more, *not fewer*, licensees and free candidate time are necessary. A properly funded and restructured public broadcasting service must be part of the solution too.

Sometimes, public TV and radio are brilliant. But, Chicago public TV station WTTW was issued this warning (hold up warning) by the FCC due to its 1994 home shopping broadcasts. In the year 2000, the FCC assessed this \$2,000 fine (hold up fine) against WTTW for airing a product advertisement. This is the first fine of its kind.

We have a very serious broadcast access problem. Nine legal and regulatory challenges have been brought against public broadcasting in Chicago over the years. Commercial broadcasters inadequately serve us and our unaccountable public outlets are financially incapable of providing that which is missing.

A permanent, independent public broadcasting trust, funded by commercial broadcasting fees, is a necessary response to the ownership concentration/access problem.

Programme partnership negotiations continue between twenty-four local peace groups and WTTW. Let’s hope our efforts result in a regular live public forum series, incorporating one-hour independent documentaries that will address the concerns of working people. The bloody lies of our time, and public broadcasting’s laws and principles demand this. The FCC deregulation contemplated would soon close this door, maybe forever.

The media must, it must, detail ownership consolidation’s stealth assault on democracy. Attendance at those Clear Channel sponsored pro-war rallies may eventually become mandatory.”