

Radio: Gifts of Sound

By Frieda Werden

I've been a community radio practitioner for more than thirty years, and during that time have observed several kinds of controversy erupting within the field. In this paper, I will examine radio and especially community radio in terms of gift economy concepts, and explore the hypothesis that much of the conflict that emerges within community radio can be seen as a conflict between a nurturing gift model and a hierarchical or patriarchal-exchange model.

“In order to reject patriarchal thinking, we must be able to distinguish between it and something else, an alternative.” –Genevieve Vaughan in *For-Giving: A Feminist Criticism of Exchange*¹

First, how is community radio different from other kinds of radio broadcasting? In actual practice, the definition of community radio is somewhat inconsistently applied, and can overlap with other categories such as public radio, state radio, and association radio², and even commercial radio. However, in December 2003, the Civil Society initiative of the World Summit on the Information Society divided mass media into three sectors that it said need to be recognized: commercial media, public service media, and community media.³ Each of these sectors can be described in terms of a gift analysis.

Commercial radio is a radio station (or network) set up as a business. Its owners sell advertising to raise revenue, and a money bottom line is usually the prime driver. It's often said of these stations that in business terms the product is the audience, which is sold to the advertiser for a profit, and that the content of the station is simply a means to attract the audience so that the audience's attention can be sold. Station rankings are determined by surveying selected people from the potential audience to find out what percentage of “market share” each station has captured, in terms of gender-and-age and economic groupings. For example, males 18-34 living in families making more than \$100,000 a year would be a pretty desirable demographic, because it's relatively easy to get them to spend money on advertised goods. It's also fairly certain that you can attract a sizeable amount of them with the right bait. The preference for a male demographic tends to skew broadcasting content towards lowest common denominator fodder for males, such as sports, smart-ass commentary (and on television, sex and violence).

In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) formerly interpreted the Communications Act of 1937 to mitigate the commercial nature of broadcast media and require that it give something of value to the public.

¹ Genevieve Vaughan in *For-Giving: A Feminist Criticism of Exchange* (Austin, Texas: Plain View Press, 1997, p. 18)

² Notably, Meridien FM in Tema, Ghana.

³ <http://www.worldsummit2003.de/en/web/229.htm> accessed January 25, 2004

The FCC took the view, in 1949, that station licensees were "public trustees," and as such had an obligation to afford reasonable opportunity for discussion of contrasting points of view on controversial issues of public importance. The Commission later held that stations were also obligated to actively seek out issues of importance to their community and air programming that addressed those issues. With the deregulation sweep of the Reagan Administration during the 1980s, the Commission dissolved the fairness doctrine.⁴

Congress passed a law in 1987 to try to restore the Fairness Doctrine by writing into law what had formerly been only administrative regulations of the FCC. However, President Reagan vetoed the bill, and other attempts have failed. Other obligations of commercial broadcasters that have been dissolved since the 1980s in the US include obligations to air news and public service programming, to give a right of reply against attack⁵, and "to offer 'equal opportunity' to all legally qualified political candidates for any office if they had allowed any person running in that office to use the station."⁶ This final requirement was suspended for 60 days by the FCC, shortly before the 2000 election, and resulted in, for example, some Belo Corporation TV stations reportedly refusing to air Democratic Presidential Candidate Al Gore's ads.⁷ The suspension of the equal time rule was supposedly in anticipation of a court ruling striking down the rule on grounds that it violated broadcasters' right of free speech; however, as of the present writing the courts have not definitively ruled on this matter.⁸

The rhetoric of the broadcast regulation that emerged in the US from the 1937 Broadcasting Act turned upon the issue of scarcity. Because broadcasting spectrum was a scarce resource and was interpreted as belonging to the public, this supposedly justified putting requirements on broadcasters to meet community needs. In 1980, broadcasters were required to make an annual survey of 19 categories of potential community needs and show how they responded to this with programming; by 2000, they were only required to keep a public file of any community issues and programs on them. Within this time frame, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 changed the rules to permit the same owners to have almost unlimited numbers of radio stations. "Family owned" radio stations that might have some human ties to the local community have virtually disappeared, swallowed up and chased out by a very limited number of fiercely competitive conglomerates.⁹

⁴ <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/F/htmlF/fairnessdoct/fairnessdoct.htm> accessed March 5, 2004

⁵ "Corollaries to the fairness doctrine — the 'personal attack' and 'political editorializing' rules — were thrown out in October 2000 by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia."

http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/Press/topic.aspx?topic=press_broadcasting, accessed March 5, 2004

⁶ <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/F/htmlF/fairnessdoct/fairnessdoct.htm> accessed March 5, 2004

⁷ WINGS #4-01 Revenge on Big Media: Dallas's cat-killers. Radio program produced by Mary O' Grady for Women's International News Gathering Service and released in 2001.

⁸ "Section 315 of the Communications Act -- the section that imposes an equal time requirement for all broadcasts featuring candidates -- may itself be unconstitutional." Michael C. Dorf, on web site <http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/08/22/findlaw.analysis.dorf.arnold/>, accessed March 5, 2004

⁹ <http://www.listenerchoice.com/essays/BroadcastingShift.html> accessed March 5, 2004.

The commonly stated rationale for permitting these ownership changes is that with the availability of more kinds of media outlets (for example, cable TV and radio, satellite radio, and netcasting), there is no longer a scarcity of media outlets. However,

Since 1994, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has conducted auctions of licenses for electromagnetic spectrum. These auctions are open to any eligible company or individual that submits an application and upfront payment, and is found to be a qualified bidder by the Commission.¹⁰

In effect, by permitting a few of the largest cash- and credit-rich companies free reign in enclosing the commons, government is colluding in an artificially enhanced scarcity of broadcasting spectrum. In the words of former Clinton-appointed FCC Chairman Bill Kennard:

Of course, spectrum has always been in short supply. But never in history have we seen more intense demands on the spectrum resource. We are in danger of suffering a "spectrum drought" in our country.¹¹

In the words of Bebe Facundus, who was forced by economics to sell the commercial women's radio station she had created in Louisiana, "Only 3 entities own everything [i.e., all the commercial radio stations] in the city of Baton Rouge, and that's happening throughout the country."¹² These conglomerate owners could buy up the most powerful stations with the best reception and greatest audience reach; they could undersell her in advertising, using economies of scale, until they drove her out of business, and they (and the casinos) could hog and drive up the price of billboards used for radio promotion. Facundus tried to make her station both attractive and useful to women in her community – an example of how a commercial station that is locally owned can cross over category and be oriented towards meeting needs. Facundus put a large amount of her own money into the station; but she was unable or unwilling to absorb a big financial loss as the conditions in the community changed. She also says about her experience that she had a problem with male investors, whom she had to buy out because "if men come in with any money they think they own everything."¹³

The loss of local ownership and local accountability is now recognized by the public in the US, and has generated such a backlash against the FCC that in October 2003 the federal regulatory body created a "Localism Task Force":

"I created the Localism Task Force to evaluate how broadcasters are serving their local communities. Broadcasters must serve the public interest, and the Commission has consistently

¹⁰ <http://wireless.fcc.gov/auctions/> accessed March 5, 2004.

¹¹ http://www.ncs.gov/N5_HP/Custom_Service/XAffairs/SpeechService/SS00-056.htm accessed March 5, 2004. I am using the US as my primary example because I am most familiar with the process there, and the because process of enclosing the commons there is very stark. However, as will be discussed in the section on government radio, there is more than one way to ensure control through scarcity.

¹² Interview notes by Frieda Werden, on web site <http://www.womensradiofund.org/femradio.htm> accessed March 5, 2004

¹³ Werden, Frieda, "A Woman's Local Commercial FM Station," on web site <http://www.womensradiofund.org/batrouge.htm> accessed March 5, 2004

interpreted this to require broadcast licensees to air programming that is responsive to the interests and needs of their communities.”- Chairman Michael K. Powell ¹⁴

A North Carolina TV station’s web site contained this reporting about the hearing in Charlotte, which was attended by Chairman Powell and other commissioners:

Powell, one of three Republicans on the commission who backed the new rules, has said he believes the issue of how broadcasters serve their local community should be addressed separately from the ownership rules.

But he could not stop speakers from bringing up the ownership dispute at the Charlotte hearing. "To try to talk about localism without discussing media ownership is avoiding the issue," said Tift Merritt, a singer-songwriter from Raleigh who told the FCC members she was unable to get her songs on her local radio station. Her comment drew applause from the packed hearing. ¹⁵

In contrast to 1960, when “Payola” (companies paying to get their records played on radio stations) was a crime, today in the US: “Listeners may not realize it, but radio today is largely bought by the record companies. Most rock and Top 40 stations get paid to play the songs they spin by the companies that manufacture the records.” ¹⁶ This affects not only local artists and the local audiences who would like to hear songs on the radio that reflect local culture, but they also shut out smaller and independent record-labels. (If you travel, you may have noticed that the music on airlines is sometimes all from a single recording company, too, e.g., Sony Music.)

Several extreme failures by conglomerate radio stations to meet local need were widely publicized and became one of the main reasons for the FCC localism hearings. For example:

In January 2002, a train carrying 10,000 gallons of anhydrous ammonia derailed in the town of Minot, causing a spill and a toxic cloud. Authorities attempted to warn the residents of Minot to stay indoors and to avoid the spill. But when the authorities called six of the seven radio stations in Minot to issue the warning, no one answered the phones. As it turned out, Clear Channel owned all six of the stations and none of the station's personnel were available at the time. ¹⁷

And then there was the report, also from the North Carolina, that the Bob & Madison Morning Show on WDCG-FM had included a lot of hate talk directed at cyclists,

¹⁴ <http://www.fcc.gov/localism/> accessed March 5, 2004 Chairman Michael Powell is the son of the US Secretary of State Colin Powell. To see what is the “community” of media owners in the US (and transnationally) today, see the web page “Who Controls the Media?” maintained by the National Organization for Women, as part of their campaign against lifting media ownership restrictions: <http://www.nowfoundation.org/issues/communications/tv/mediacontrol.html>

¹⁵ “FCC Localism Hearing Draws Large, Vocal Crowd” on web site <http://www.wral.com/news/2574901/detail.html> POSTED: 9:52 p.m. EDT October 22, 2003 UPDATED: 10:18 p.m. EDT October 22, 2003.

¹⁶ Eric Boehlert in “Pay for Play,” <http://dir.salon.com/ent/feature/2001/03/14/payola/index.html>

¹⁷ “#17 Clear Channel Monopoly Draws Criticism,” on web site <http://www.projectcensored.org/publications/2004/17.html> – summarizes coverage by Jeff Perlstein from September 2002.

including discussion of how much fun it was to run cyclists off the road. Cycling organizations' protests got the station to promise to run road safety announcements, but these public service announcements were reportedly also parodied and derided by the morning show hosts.¹⁸

So-called shock radio with hate elements, including sexism, has become standard fare for many commercial radio stations across the US, especially in the most widely listened-to time slots. Howard Stern, a shock jock syndicated by a CBS subsidiary, got away with advocating rape, among other things.¹⁹ According to FAIR (the New York-based NGO Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), hate radio is political.²⁰ This assessment would seem to be borne out by the fact that Stern's show was cancelled from all the stations of the vast Clear Channel network in February 2004. While CNN reported that this was because Stern violated the FCC's new decency standards,²¹ Stern himself was widely quoted as saying that it was because "I dared to speak out against the Bush administration and say that the religious agenda of George W. Bush concerning stem cell research and gay marriage is wrong."²²

Hate radio for political purposes is far more widespread than just in the US, of course. According to Radio Netherlands, "Hate radio killed more than 800,000 people in the last decade." They maintain regularly updated listing of examples of both Hate Radio and Peace Radio stations.²³ Among the examples of hate radio they list:

Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) is the most recent and widely reported symbol of "hate radio" throughout the world. Its broadcasts, disseminating hate propaganda and inciting to murder Tutsis and opponents to the regime, began on 8 July 1993, and greatly contributed to the 1994 genocide of hundreds of thousands.

The hate radio station in Rwanda was succeeded in 1994 by two peace radio stations, **Radio Agatashya** ("*the swallow that brings hope*" in Kinyarwanda) and **Radio Amahoro** ("Radio Peace"). Apparently both these stations were short-lived. Radio Netherlands describes the funding crisis of Radio Agatashya thus:

¹⁸ <http://www.mediageek.org/archives/002169.html> , posting dated October 23, 2003.

¹⁹ Jennifer Pozner, "I'd Take Them Out with Sex: Journalists trivialize Howard Stern's advocacy of rape as 'Insensitivity'" in *Extra*, July/August 1999. Found on web site: <http://www.fair.org/extra/9907/stern.html>

²⁰ See collection of back articles from FAIR on <http://www.fair.org/media-outlets/talk-radio.html>

²¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2004/SHOWBIZ/News/02/25/stern.suspension/>, dated Feb. 26 2004. NB: These new "decency standards" are also quite political, a reversal of the entire trend toward deregulation of media content pleasing to the fundamentalist sector of the US political right.

²² "Stern Feels Bush-Whacked, End is Near," dated March 3, 2004, on web site <http://www.fmqb.com/Article.asp?id=20252>

[I can't resist mentioning here that in my research for discussion of the rationale for shock radio's popularity, I found web sites selling term papers on this topic for \$9.95 a page!]

²³ <http://www.rnw.nl/realradio/dossiers/html/hateintro.html> , viewed March 6, 2004; page last updated February 10, 2004.

It was originally set up by UNESCO and Reporters Sans Frontières in August 1994, but was taken over by the Swiss-based Fondation Hironnelle (Swallow Foundation) from August 1995. In June 1994 it was pledged a US\$20,000 grant by UNESCO, which it never received, and turned down a French government gift of 250,000 French francs owing to the French military involvement in Rwanda. It was funded by the UNHCR, European Union and the Swiss government. ... The radio has been off the air since 27 October 1996, mainly due to a funding shortage.

In 2000, I attended the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and met a UN delegate from Rwanda, who told me that she was interested in getting a women's radio station started in Rwanda because that would be a good way to promote peace. In 1997 an organization called Health Unlimited organized a team of Rwandans to produce a women's radio soap opera and a 15-minute women's radio magazine program that were aired twice a week on Radio Rwanda, starting in 1999 and apparently continuing to the present time.²⁴ Another radio station for peace is Radio UNAMSIL, established in Sierra Leone by Sheila Dallas, to promote the UN's peacekeeping mission. The story of this successful effort is told by Dallas in radio program #28-03 "Peace Radio in Sierra Leone" from the Women's International News Gathering Service.²⁵

The association between women's radio and peace has a flip side in that shock radio, also described as "aggressive reality" radio, finds more of its listenership among males.²⁶ Not surprisingly, it is also understood to be a tool of a religio-Republican hierarchical ideology that has been struggling hard against feminism and environmentalism in the US. Patrick Burkart analyzed this phenomenon in an essay in the collectively-published magazine *Bad Subjects: Education for Everyday Life*.²⁷

Using Clinton's election in 1992 as a basis for a backlash, talk show programs directed momentum-building campaigns of mass fax-and-phone call petitions to national politicians, especially in response to changing federal policies towards abortion restrictions, discrimination against gays and lesbians, and strengthening national educational standards.

Burkart makes reference to earlier studies of Nazi radio, as well as to the methodology of contemporary right-wing talk radio, which is absolutist and builds a false sense of consensus:

On the market, talk radio is inherently conservative because disagreement and dissent are programmed out of talk radio shows de facto, by reaching only those audiences with lifestyles that support consumption of this entertainment technology.

²⁴ <http://www.comminit.com/pdsradiodrama/sld-9388.html>, **Case Study 9: Rwanda - Urunana (Hand in Hand)**

²⁵ <http://www.wings.org/2003.html>

²⁶ Heidi Dietrich, "Polite market: Area not known for shock radio," in Puget Sound Business Journal, October 17, 2003 Print Edition, archived on the web at <http://seattle.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/2003/10/20/story3.html> accessed March 6, 2004

²⁷ Patrick Burkart, "Radio Shock: Talk Radio Propaganda," in *Bad Subjects*, Issue # 23, December 1995 archived on the web at <http://www.eserver.org/bs/23/burkart.html> accessed March 6, 2004

Groups ranging from Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting in New York,²⁸ to the Coalition Against Hate Radio in Portland, Oregon²⁹, among others, recommend liberals to mount campaigns that include calling in to hate radio programs. However, Burkart explains in his article that the shock radio programs today use technologies such as pre-screening callers and using a delay to allow editing calls even on live radio, in order to build up a picture of monolithic public opinion supporting the hosts' fascistic pronouncements.

As Genevieve Vaughan writes in *For-Giving*:

An environment is created in which some ideas fit together and thrive because they are validated as permissible and respectable, while their alternatives are discredited. The so-called 'free market' of ideas, like the economic free market, often promotes the benefit of a (genetically superior?) few while appearing to be good for everyone. ... Systems of ideas which have been taught us as the truth back up the political and economic systems of which they are a part."³⁰

Burkart's analysis of right-wing radio is corroborative of that insight:

Shock radio is a technocratic forum, portraying its ideological perspective...delivering daily, oracular, absolutist insights. Rush Limbaugh reminds his audience regularly that he is the only voice of the truth in 'the media'

Commercialism also has a role in less "mainstream" hate radio, whose purveyors simply buy time from commercial operators that exercise no control over the content. This, for example, appears on the web site of famous Nazi sympathizer Ernst Zundel:

With only a limited budget, anyone can buy airtime on hundreds of AM or shortwave stations throughout America. Almost everyone listens to the radio! Ernst Zundel urges his listeners to join the 'Freedom Evolution' towards Truth and Justice, by participating in this bold new venture in mass communication.³¹

Zundel is presently fighting deportation from Canada to Germany, where he would face criminal charges of "inciting hate."³²

²⁸ "Challenging Hate Radio: A Guide for Activists" on the web page <http://www.fair.org/activism/hate-radio.html>: "**Call in to the show.** Call the on-air line during the show and try to challenge the racism, sexism or homophobia calmly and directly. It often doesn't take much to demonstrate the absurdity of bigoted arguments. If several people call in, it can change the entire show. "

²⁹ "Groups Demand End to 'Hate Radio'" by John C. posted *Wednesday, Apr. 24, 2002 at 7:23 PM* on the web page http://www.indybay.org/news/2002/04/124735_comment.php

³⁰ Vaughan, *For-Giving*, p. 19

³¹ http://www.zundel.org/english/catalog/audio_catalog.html accessed March 10, 2004

³² Greg Bonnell, "Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel to remain in jail pending immigration hearing," Tuesday April 1, 2003, in *CNews Law and Order*, archived on web page <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Law/2003/03/31/55093-cp.html> accessed March 10, 2004

Public Service Radio is a second category of media that the 2003 Civil Society initiative of the World Summit on the Information Society says must be recognized. Public service radio could mean many things,³³ but you can get an idea of the generally accepted range by looking at the membership of the European Broadcasting Union. Its members are “radio and television companies, most of which are government-owned public service broadcasters or privately owned stations with public missions.” Support and control relationships between public service broadcasters and governments vary. Stations and networks may be owned by the government like Radio Mozambique.³⁴ They may be owned by a foundation partly controlled by the government, like Swedish national radio.³⁵ They may be owned by a state-initiated private company, funded by a dedicated tax and with nominal government control, like the BBC. In the case of National Public Radio in the US, you have a non-profit corporation indirectly funded by a line in the government budget, with the money laundered first through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (a bipartisan politically directed body) and then through a network of member stations that are also listener-, donor-, and business-funded. Looking at these structures, you can infer that public service radio is intended to be for the public benefit, but not “by the people.” In many cases, the government makes show of an arms-length relationship, but I think it is fair to say that these entities are expected to promote stability in the present system and cannot afford to be radical. It is a fact, however, that in the current climate of capitalist globalization even maintaining the status quo can become radical by default.

Remember that radio itself is only about 100 years old. In 1894 Marconi “made a bell ring using radio waves.” In 1902 there was a “public demonstration of radio.” Not til 1906 were the first radio set advertised and the first music broadcast on radio. Radio transmitters interfering with each other soon became an obvious problem. The first US law to regulate broadcasters was passed in 1912³⁶ This was, incidentally, the year the Titanic sank, a ship that had a radio but couldn’t reach anyone with it. The nearest ship did not have a 24-hour radio operator. It was also the period of the First World War, and governments could certainly see the building power of radio for war, not only at home but also in their colonies.

³³ In the US, the term “public service radio” is sometimes applied to emergency radio communications used by police and fire departments, and “public radio” is used for the noncommercial broadcast stations..

³⁴ <http://www.tvradioworld.com/region3/moz/> accessed March 12, 2004

³⁵ Christina Ruhnbro, private e-mail, March 15, 2004

³⁶ “Radio Broadcasting History” timeline, archived on web page <http://senior.billings.k12.mt.us/otrannex/history/radio.htm> accessed March 6 2004.

New Zealand passed the first law to require government licensing of radio, in 1903,³⁷ while it was still a British colony.³⁸ Private broadcasting was introduced there in 1923, but in 1936 the 22 private broadcasters were nationalized to create a state broadcasting monopoly. In 1947, New Zealand became one of many colonies that gained full independence from Britain. Like other former British colonies (and most of the rest of the world) it retained monopoly broadcasting and looked to the BBC for ideas. However, the BBC's programming was supported by government-levied licensing fees for radio receivers, and New Zealand was too small a country to make much money that way; hence, they took advertising, with its attendant pressure to make programs attractive to wealthy businesses. They also bought the majority of their programs from BBC [In 1983, a UNESCO study showed that Britain had 85% local programming on TV and New Zealand had only 25%].

In the mid-1980s, a New Zealand Royal Commission “advocated a strong public service system with limits on advertising levels and a local programme quota.” But instead, national broadcasting was made into a state-owned enterprise that was supposed to return a profit to the government. Bids for programs the government wanted produced were let out for bidding to private companies. One big project the government funded was the medical soap opera *Shortland Street*, “NZOA's major prime-time vehicle for representing a changing national culture.” *Shortland Street* is a wonderful example of how government funded programs can be politically shifted. Watched by 700,000 Kiwis every weeknight, the show has been top-ranked drama in the country ever since its debut. But as its web site describes, it has changed:

When *Shortland Street* began in 1992, 'privatisation' and 'business practice' were the buzzwords of a health system reinventing itself. The direction of healthcare seemed to lie in the private accident and emergency clinics springing up around the country. The forward-looking clinic Shortland Street A&E Medical was the way of the future.

Ten years later, faced with a decline in the demand for specialist private clinic services, *Shortland Street* has become a public hospital, funded by a district health board, and managed by a DHB-appointed CEO. Reflecting the health services most in demand in the fictional suburb of Ferndale, it provides a 24-hour accident and emergency service, community services (including GPs and preventative health care programmes), and elective surgery facilities.³⁹

The program had been initiated by the right-wing National Party during the Labour Party interregnum of 1990-99, with the obvious political aim of normalizing privatized healthcare. Perhaps unfortunately for the Labour Party when it returned, it wasn't as simple to turn around broadcasting policy as it was to change content. In 1991, New Zealand under the National Party had dropped all restrictions on transnational ownership of broadcasting, and the results had been disappointing to some:

³⁷ “A Brief History of Regulation of Radiocommunications in New Zealand 1903 – 2003” on the web page <http://www.med.govt.nz/rsm/publications/pibs/radiohistory/footnotes.html#fn09> accessed March 6, 2004

³⁸ “Timeline: New Zealand” at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1138430.stm accessed March 6, 2004.

³⁹ From the *Shortland Street* web site, FAQ <http://shortlandstreet.nzoom.com/faq/> accessed March 11, 2004

Although the introduction of competition has significantly increased the number of television services available within New Zealand, there is heated debate as to whether it has extended the range of programming on offer.

Critics of the reforms point to the cultural costs of the minimal restrictions on commercial operators, the intensified competition for ratings points, ...the absence of any quota to protect local programming, to NZOA's inability to compel stations to show the programmes it has funded in favourable slots; and to the marked increase in advertising time which gives more space to commercial speech and less to other voices.⁴⁰

The National Party had not only deregulated New Zealand's broadcasting sector, it had made a gift of it to the corporations and corporate-controlled states through GATS (the General Agreement on Trade and Services, an internationally negotiated trade pact.

New Zealand deregulated its broadcasting sector and listed it as a covered service under the GATS. It is thus constrained from reintroducing content quotas, despite a change in government and a clear public will to re-regulate the sector.⁴¹

Most other countries have similar points of struggle to New Zealand's. There are governments that still maintain broadcasting monopolies, but far fewer now, even in Africa and Asia. Zimbabwe remains one of the few governments that maintain total monopoly over broadcasting. Recently a high-ranking minister there cancelled the popular national anti-AIDS TV soap opera *Mopane Junction*, because funding had come from the Centers for Disease Control in the United States.⁴²

Canada is a country that still has a major government-funded public service broadcaster. Through a combination of budget cuts and exponential growth of its competition, the CBC has lost ground in the ratings, but is still the major opinion-testing ground of the nation, and clearly courts more diversity of opinions than the US commercial talk radio referenced in the beginning of this article. Canada also has stiff requirements for Canadian Content (CanCon) in the music played on its radio outlets; and the province of Quebec has additional quotas for playing songs that include at least some French. (This can be contrasted with the Canadian film industry. The government still puts substantial, if shrinking, amounts of money into subsidizing Canadian filmmaking through the Film Board of Canada; however, as movie theatre ownership is overtaken by American-based chains drawing on American-based major distributors, Canadians often bemoan the fact that it's very hard to find places to view Canadian films outside of festivals.)

With so much shared border and so much shared language between Canada and the economically and culturally aggressive US, the results of dropping Canadian cultural quotas and subsidies would be instantly noticeable and highly unpopular. Canada was one of the countries that brought the 2003 Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) to a halt in the fall of 2003, largely over the issue of protection of cultural diversity. In July of 2001, Canada proposed this phrase to be part of the preamble of the FTAA:

⁴⁰ <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/N/htmlN/newzealand/newzealand.htm> accessed March 6, 2004

⁴¹ "Advancing Cultural Diversity Globally: The Role of Civil Society Movements, on web page http://www.incd.net/Conf2003/INCD_papers2003_Convention.htm, accessed March 10, 2004

⁴² Musi Khumalo, private communication February 2004.

“... countries must maintain the ability to preserve, develop and implement their cultural policies for the purpose of strengthening cultural diversity, given the essential role that cultural goods and services play in the identity and diversity of society and the lives of individuals...”
(FTAA.tci/w/04)⁴³

Other countries share Canada’s concerns. The UNESCO Executive Committee recommended in 2003 that a Convention on Cultural Diversity be developed as a legally-binding international instrument, citing:

- There is a growing awareness that aspects of globalization are leading to cultural homogenization and increasing the difficulties for local and diverse cultural production.
- Bilateral and multilateral trade agreements make the situation worse by limiting the ability of nations to support their own artists, cultural producers and institutions. Trade in “products and services” of the “entertainment industry” is big business, accounting for an increasing share of the trade balance of several countries.
- “Exempting” culture from trade rules has been ineffective in preserving cultural sovereignty. WTO rules have been applied to cultural activities by trade panels. Cultural policies are increasingly made to conform to trade commitments. Developing nations cannot promote their own indigenous artists and cultural producers even when they have the capacity to implement appropriate policies.

Sweden provides a tidy example of public service radio at the service of national policy.⁴⁴ The current guidelines for Sweden’s public service broadcasting were vetted by a committee appointed by the government that included members of all the parties in the Riksdag (Parliament). What they accepted includes this definition:

In general terms the task of **public service radio** and TV can be described as giving everyone access to a balanced and independent selection of high quality programmes with no commercial advertising. Among other things this means that the broadcasts shall reach people throughout the country and that the broadcasts shall be so composed that it ranges from programmes of general interest to the more specialised, at the same time as the citizens are given new and unexpected choices of programmes and genres. The broadcasts shall be characterised by the fundamental democratic principles by which the state is governed and shall meet the requirements of impartiality, objectivity and independence of both state and private interests, and of political, economic and other spheres of authority. All programmes shall be of high quality. Another important aspect is that the broadcasts shall reflect the country as a whole and that programmes therefore shall be produced in different parts of Sweden.

One may note within the description above a number of phrases that are typically used for keeping station and programming decision-making within establishment boundaries, such as “of high quality,” and “objectivity.”⁴⁵ “Diversity,” explicitly mentioned

⁴³ FTAA Trade Negotiations Committee Canada, Paper on Cultural Diversity in the FTAA Negotiations,” September 23, 2003, on http://www.ftaa-alca.org/TNC/tnw195_e.asp, accessed March 10, 2004

⁴⁴ Ministry of Culture, Sweden, “Public Service Radio and Television 2005” on the web page http://www.google.ca/search?q=cache:mWfBSHFt2QgJ:kultur.regeringen.se/inenglish/pressinfo/pdf/Public_service_%2520eng.pdf+%22public+service+radio%22&hl=en&ie=UTF-8 accessed March 11, 2004

⁴⁵ See, for an example of such discussion, Noam Chomsky’s book *Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship*, which discusses objectivity as an ideological mask for championing mainstream self-interest against mass movements for change.

elsewhere in the guidelines, is largely described in terms of geography and alternative languages. But we also see, later in the same document, indicators that Sweden intends public service broadcasting should be something of a counterweight to private media consolidation:

Public service radio and television enjoy high status and will become increasingly important when there is greater competition. The Government proposes that the fundamental principles for public service broadcasting shall continue to apply and considers that there is broad agreement on having well-established **public service radio** and television companies in Sweden in the future. Vigorous **public service radio** and television can provide a strong balancing force in a media landscape that otherwise risks being dominated by a few actors.

In early 2004, there's been conflict in the UK around the independence of the BBC from government control. I had imagined when I began researching this that BBC was a government entity that had been granted independence by sufferance, but when I looked into its history, I found that it was actually a private-public partnership from its inception in 1922:

Though it was the Post Office that had initiated the meeting, it was the six main manufacturers of radio equipment (the Marconi Company, Metropolitan-Vickers, the Western Electric Company, the Radio Communication Company, the General Electric Company, and the British Thompson-Houston Company) who were asked to form a committee to prepare the plan for broadcasting in Britain.

The formation of the BBC involved companies making a capital investment for setting up transmitting stations that would reach all of Britain, thus creating a demand for radio receivers. The "new BBC was to undertake to sell only British-made sets, to pay to the Company 10 per cent of the net wholesale selling price of all broadcast receiving apparatus." BBC was also forbidden to accept money for carrying any message or music, except with written permission from the Postmaster. In 1927, Parliament joined the troika with the Postmaster-General and the corporate governors, and was nominally given "ultimate control" of the BBC; but basically "broadcasting had become a monopoly, financed by licencing fees on radio receivers, and administered by an independent public corporation."⁴⁶

One of the stumbling blocks BBC had to get around when it began was opposition by the British newspaper industry. Initially the industry won a rule saying that the BBC would have to buy and pay for its news from existing print news services. Before long, of course, it outstripped these other sources – it still pays rather well, but has its own relationship with correspondents. Recently the conflict between BBC and newspapers has heated up again, though, and the crux of the matter is related to gift-giving.

In August 2003, a headline appeared reading "Dyke to Open Up BBC Archive." The Greg Dyke, Director General of the BBC, had announced that

everyone would in future be able to download BBC radio and TV programmes from the internet. The service, the BBC Creative Archive, would be free and available to everyone, as long as they were not intending to use the material for commercial purposes. . .

⁴⁶ "The Unofficial Guide to the BBC" on web site http://www.vaxxine.com/master-control/BBC/chapters/Bbc_form.html accessed March 11, 2004

"The BBC probably has the best television library in the world," said Mr Dyke, who was speaking at the Edinburgh TV Festival. ... "I believe that we are about to move into a second phase of the digital revolution, a phase which will be more about public than private value; about free, not pay services; about inclusivity, not exclusion. ...it will be about how public money can be combined with new digital technologies to transform everyone's lives."⁴⁷

Dyke's announcement of free content fell in the middle of a spate of decisions by other UK news agencies that they were going to start charging for content on the internet. An analysis appeared on the University of Southern California's *Online Journalism Review*:

The BBC has the most popular British news Web site by far, with 16 to 20 million unique users per month. But it has pockets £2 billion (\$3.32 billion) deep, filled with taxpayers' money. While it does not run advertising, most commercial newspapers believe that the BBC makes it harder to compete and survive because it poaches potential readers and subscribers.

The BBC response is to claim the public service defense. "We believe that the news we provide is a valuable service for the UK's license fee payers," said [Pete Clifton](#), the newly appointed editor for [BBC News Online](#). "It delivers to them, on an increasingly important platform, a rich source of BBC News content which they may have missed elsewhere. This content, paid for by them, covers news from local to international, and we feel it is right to make this available on the Web."

Newspapers are eagerly awaiting the British government's [online review](#), which will report on the market impact of BBC's Web business next year. Many in the industry want curbs placed on the BBC Online; they hope the online review will make recommendations to that effect.

All of the United Kingdom's bigger online news operations are focused now on growing profits -- and doing that is naturally more difficult in a marketplace where one of your competitors is deeply subsidized and giving away top product for free.⁴⁸

This controversy reflects a very deep conflict in societies around the world between models of socially provided goods and services that are collectively supported for all, and individual payment on the barrelhead for everything (even essentials of life like water). In the case of public service radio in the UK, "free" access to information and entertainment was made possible by over-the-air broadcasting to all who have the receivers, and those who bought the receivers paid for this information through dedicated taxes. Now public access to what is essentially collective wealth is being vastly extended by the BBC's opening its archives to all who have sufficient internet tool access, and this is considered an attack by those who need a condition of scarcity to help them make money on selling information.

It is important that the resemblance between the issue of information access and water access is not merely coincidental. Both are the subject of extremely heated trade negotiations, legislative activity, regulatory interpretations, and court fights all over the world, brought by a corporate sector that seeks to privatize valuable resources in both the material and the information commons. New laws formed in these arenas are extending copyrights, so that the products of creativity are not coming out into the public domain.

⁴⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/3177479.stm accessed March 12, 2004

⁴⁸ Daithí Ó hAnluain, "Free Content Becoming Thing of the Past for UK's Online Newspaper Sites," in *Online Journal Review*, posted Feb 13, 2004. Web site <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/business/1067472919.php> accessed March 12, 2004

They are newly criminalizing the copying of “intellectual property” even for individual use, research, or critical analysis. They are giving broadcasters and distributors new ownership rights over material that they did not create. And they are extending enforcement jurisdiction not only to those who actually copy or share protected intellectual property, but to those whose services or equipment designs are used in these newly illegal activities. That means internet service providers and engineers being held liable for what might be done by others. ISPs in some places are being subpoenaed to provide the names of their users who might potentially be sharing music files, for example, and coerced to provide this information under penalty of law.⁴⁹ As pointed out by attorney Robin Gross of the organization IP Justice, these new laws and trade regimes contravene an international human right, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 19. The Right to Communicate. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

⁴⁹ Robin Gross, speech at the Community Media panel on Intellectual Property Rights, World Summit on the Information Society, 11 December 2003. Recorded by Frieda Werden, and forthcoming as an audio program in WINGS: Women’s International News Gathering Service.

This brings us then to the final section of this article, and a discussion of **community radio**. Community radio is the form most clearly concerned not only with people's ability to seek and receive information through media, but also with our ability to "impart information and ideas" to one another. As Genevieve Vaughan has pointed out in *For-Giving*: "'Co-muni-cation' is giving gifts (from the Latin munus -- gift) together. It is how we form 'co-muni-ty.'"⁵⁰

Even more than for commercial or public service radio, the parameters of community radio can be hard to define.

Some stations are owned by not-for-profit groups or by cooperatives whose members are the listeners themselves. Others are owned by students, universities, municipalities, churches or trade unions. There are stations financed by donations from listeners, by international development agencies, by advertising and by governments. ---"*Waves for Freedom*". *Report on the Sixth World Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters. Dakar, Senegal, January 23-39, 1995*⁵¹

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC [Association Mondiale des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires]), based in Montreal, promotes mutual support among community radios around the world. They organized the Dakar conference of community broadcasters referenced above, as well as seven others since 1983. AMARC has members that are licensed and members that broadcast illegally; members that are free-standing stations, members that do community radio in the permitted niches of state broadcasters, and members that share frequencies with stations that may have incompatible aims to their own. If you go to the AMARC web site < www.amarc.org > and click on "What is Community Radio?" you'll find instead of one definition a series of quotes submitted by members in different regions. For example, from Latin America, where community radio stations are numerous and are often strongly linked to anti-oligarchical struggles:

Radio stations that bear this name do not fit the logic of money or advertising. Their purpose is different, their best efforts are put at the disposal of civil society. Of course this service is highly political: it is a question of influencing public opinion, denying conformity, creating consensus, broadening democracy. The purpose – whence the name – is to *build community life*. "*Manual urgente para Radialistas Apasionados*". José Ignacio López Vigil. 1997

In Latin America, there are approximately one thousand radio stations that can be considered community, educational, grassroots or civic radio stations. **They are characterized by their political objectives of social change**, their search for a fair system that takes into account human rights, and makes power accessible to the masses and open to their participation. "*Gestión de la radio comunitaria y ciudadana*". Claudia Villamayor y Ernesto Lamas. AMARC y Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. 1998

From Canada, where community radio is obligated by government to promote diversity and Canadian culture:

The tone of each community radio station is well modulated in the image of its listeners. The important thing is to seek out differences.

⁵⁰ Genevieve Vaughan in *For-Giving*, pp. 25-26

⁵¹ "What is COMMUNITY RADIO?" on www.amarc.org/amarc/ang accessed March 16, 2004

Community radio is an element of closeness, a bridge, a step toward the other, not to make the other like us, but to have him become what he is. It is not a question of having more, but of being, that is the real mission of community radio stations in Canada. Isn't the most meaningful definition of culture the act of making people aware of the greatness they possess? *Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, ARC. Canada.*

From France:

Free, independent, lay radio stations that are linked to human rights and concerned about the environment.

They are many and pluralistic.

They refuse mercantile communication.

They scrupulously respect the code of ethics of journalists and work to disseminate culture by giving artists broader expression within their listening audiences.

They have association status, democratic operation and financing consistent with the fact that they are non-profit organizations.

They are solidary toward each other and constitute work communities that make it possible for each member to fulfill its mission to the utmost.

Charte de la Confédération Nationale des Radios Libres, CNRL. France.

From the Philippines, where radio was very powerful in mobilizing People Power that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship:

Stations collectively operated by the community people.

Stations dedicated to development, education and people empowerment.

Stations which adhere to the principles of democracy and participation.

TAMBULI - Communication Project. Philippines

From India, where virtually all broadcasting has long been controlled by All-India Radio, which is both the national broadcaster and the regulator, and has occasionally doled out bits of airtime to community broadcasters under a tight rein:

community radio programming is designed by the community, to improve social conditions and the quality of its cultural life. The community itself decides what its priorities and needs are in terms of information provision. *VOICES. India.*

From Africa:

The historical philosophy of community radio is to use this medium as the voice of the voiceless, the mouthpiece of oppressed people (be it on racial, gender, or class grounds) and generally as a tool for development. *"What is Community Radio? A resource guide". AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa. 1998*

A far-reaching example of community radio organizing originated in Africa was started by women, during the period when government-controlled radio was the rule across the continent. In 1988, the Zimbabwe chapter of the Federation of African Media Women (FAMW) resolved to get more rural women's participation into broadcasting, and came up with the idea for radio listening clubs.⁵² These professional women communicators

⁵²Chido E. F. Matewa, *Media and the Empowerment of Communities for Social Change* (PhD dissertation 2002), "Chapter Five: Participatory and development communication in Zimbabwe" archived on the web at <http://www.comminit.com/idmatewa/sld-6133.html> accessed March 15, 2004.

contacted women in rural villages, asked them to listen to the radio as a group, and then recorded the rural women's comments and questions. Next the journalists took the rural women's questions to public officials and asked them to respond.⁵³ Programs combining these elements were aired on Zimbabwe Radio 4; the rural women listened to the programs, again responded, and the series went on in this vein. Eventually, having observed how little it took to make the recordings, the rural women asked to be given their own recording equipment, and told the professional journalists they were no longer needed during the discussions.⁵⁴

Radio listening clubs spread first to other countries in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region, and then to other parts of the world. It became a model for other feminist and community media projects in film, video, and still photography. And it's been copied by governmental and non-governmental development agencies seeking to accelerate social change. In the PhD dissertation *Media and the Empowerment of Communities for Social Change*, Chido Matewa writes of radio listening clubs: *grassroots participation is what sets this project design apart and distinguishes it from other rural radio which is in line with the agenda setting theory of McCombs and Shaw, i.e. that the media agenda (MA) leads to the people's agenda (PA): MA>>>>PA.* [italics in original].⁵⁵ [I can't resist commenting that the "MA leads to PA" formula might be phrased in a more feminist manner: "MA leads PA."]

According to Matewa, radio listening club membership declines when radio sets became more available in villages, so expansion has been in ever more remote areas. However, some radio listening clubs evolved into community radio stations. One was Radio Mama, the women's station in Kampala, Uganda, regrettably shut down by the Ugandan government on January 8, 2004 (reportedly for not having paid its license fees).⁵⁶ According to an interview I conducted in 2002, Radio Mama had been assigned a broadcasting frequency that could not be picked up on car radios, a staggering handicap for developing an audience.

Audience and the relationship of broadcasters to audience can be very distinctive in community radio.

Audience isn't everything, though, where community radio is concerned. The legendary Margaretta D'Arcy is an AMARC member who runs Radio Pirate Women in Galway, Ireland – a pirate (unlicensed) station that operates during periodic Womens Radio Festivals, using a transmitter small enough to fit in a purse. When a reporter asked D'Arcy how many listeners the station had, she stated that listeners were completely

⁵³ Note that CEDAW – the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, requires that all signatory states provide mechanisms for the participation of rural women in public decision-making. Zimbabwe finally ratified CEDAW in 1991.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Karonga in radio program "WINGS #44-00 Media for Women's Development" produced by Frieda Werden.

⁵⁵ Matewa, op.cit.

⁵⁶ "MAMA FM Closes, on web site <http://radio.oneworld.net/article/view/73528/1/> accessed March 15, 2004

unimportant – the women talk on the radio, they listen to each other, get all fired up, and then they go out in the street and they demonstrate!

Other uses for participatory radio that have little to do with audience numbers were told to me by Maria Suarez, longtime co-producer of FIRE (Feminist International Radio Endeavour / Radio Feminista Internacional), which was first a shortwave program and now an internet radio program based in Costa Rica. In a published interview about FIRE's feminist radio activities at the UN Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994), Suarez explained that having a media outlet under feminist control allowed women to bring people together for discussion on the air, and this helped the feminists could find out what their opponents were thinking. Furthermore, recordings from the broadcasts gave incontrovertible proof to the Costa Rican government of what their designated representatives had been supporting at the conference that was against the professed policy of the government.⁵⁷ With a worldwide audience, FIRE has had to come up with an innovative method of doing

The issue of audience is often a point of contention within the community radio movement, and especially so in the United States, where mass culture has become the measure of so much of life. Commercial radio stations use commercial measuring services to come up with audience “ratings.” The sample of people asked to give data on their listening habits is supposedly randomly selected from fixed demographic categories (e.g., males 18-34). Standings in the Arbitron ratings are used to rank stations in terms of “market share” both geographically and demographically, and these figures in turn are used by stations to set advertising rates. That is the process by which the invisible product of human attention to radio is made visible and sold.⁵⁸ One of the questions community radio has to ask itself is, if we don't accept the commercial definitions of “market segment” and gender-and-age demographics, and we don't get our funding from advertisers buying that audience, then how do we define our community, and where do we find our support?

One of the major pressures on community radio in the US has been the fact that most of the noncommercial stations in the US have been getting federal subsidies. To understand Leadership, volunteers, and listeners to community stations struggle over whether less-political and more-consistent programming will draw and keep larger and wealthier audiences, who will give more and larger contributions to the stations during their pledge drives. A major impetus to seek change came from changes in federal funding rules for noncommercial stations, which forced stations that wanted the funding to have larger paid staffs, and to raise money to match the funds they received, instead of being able to count volunteer hours as contributions.⁵⁹ Stations that followed advice to go for the new

⁵⁷ Maria Suarez Toro, “Feminist International Radio Endeavour – FIRE,” in *Women Transforming Communications*, ed. Donna Allen, et al. (Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications, 1996)..

⁵⁸ I should mention here that community broadcasters, including both FIRE and the great community station Bush Radio in Cape Town, South Africa, are coming up with new and appropriate ways of not only measuring but valuing their audiences.

⁵⁹ Anonymous, [Pacifica] PROGRAM DIRECTOR MEETING (PART II) ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO FEBRUARY 28, 1995 on web site <http://www.radio4all.org/fp/pdmeet1.html>; and

demographic often failed to thrive as hoped, and some have returned to their old “mission-driven” programmatic. Meanwhile, breakaway stations from the National Federation of Community Broadcasters created a new annual conference, the Grassroots Radio Conference. The founders of the GRC wrote an article explaining their movement. I excerpt here from a version found on the web:

What is grassroots radio?

You can recognize a grassroots community station anywhere in the country. There is a freshness you’ll not hear elsewhere due largely to the variety of voices and connections the station has with its community . . . Local programming is the backbone of community radio, [but] another element that connects grassroots stations are the independently-produced national programs many of us broadcast, including Alternative Radio . . . WINGS (Women’s International News Gathering Service), National Native News, and Making Contact.

These national programs connect the grassroots stations, while our local programs ground us in our own communities . . . Sometimes the performances of inexperienced programmers are rough...[but] those new voices become competent and creative broadcasters before our very ears . . . It is insulting the intelligence of people to think that they can not accept or appreciate variety of programming . . . We believe in expanding the audience for the variety, not reducing the variety to expand the audience . . . Important principles to maintaining a community involved grassroots station are: participatory governance, with active committees involved in decision-making, community and volunteer involvement in all major decisions, openness on the air (no gag orders!), elected volunteer representatives serving on the board of directors, open access to the airwaves, active recruitment and ongoing training of volunteers, commitment to diversity, consideration of those under-served by other broadcast media, and diverse programming. . .⁶⁰

I think the ability of some people to convince others that community radio should orient itself toward a mass market appeal to a superficially involved audience has much to do with a systemic disrespect for gift economic activity as described in *For-Giving*:

The gift paradigm emphasizes the importance of giving to satisfy needs. It is need-oriented rather than profit-oriented. Free giftgiving to needs -- what in mothering we would call nurturing or caring work -- is often not counted and may remain invisible in our society or seem uninformative because it is qualitatively rather than quantitatively based.⁶¹

It seems to me that key questions for community radio are always about What is our community? To whom are we giving, who can creatively receive and use this gift? Sometimes the community is defined by geography, sometimes by class or political values. In the case of Radio Ada, a community station in Ghana, the founders originally thought they were only going to serve the fishing community of Ada; but because they

Lyn Gerry, “KPFK Programmers Ordered to Mainstream Content; Advocacy Journalism is ‘Out,’” dated May 26, 1998, on the web page <http://www.radio4all.org/fp/mainstream.htm> accessed March 16, 2004

⁶⁰ Marty Durlin and Cathy Melio, “The Grassroots Radio Movement in the US,” found on the web page <http://www.morelater.com/kaos/forum/messages/43.html> accessed March 16, 2004

⁶¹ Vaughan, *For-Giving*, p. 24

could uniquely fill a need for local, participatory radio programming in the Dangme language, they ended up serving the entire region of about 500,000 Dangme-speaking people, half of whom are not literate. The station's mission is now "to support the development aspirations and objectives of the Dangme people, give a voice to the voiceless, sustain the growth of Dangme culture, and encourage, promote and contribute to informed dialogue and reflective action."⁶² I visited the station in 2003, and was fascinated by a description of how they work on reflective action in the public sphere. First, they ask the people what their problems are. Then they ask who is responsible to deal with them. Then they go to the official and ask what they have done about the problem. Then they give everybody time to think and work on the problem. All this groundwork is done before they do any recording, so no one is supposed to be shamed on air before they've had a chance to improve their practice. I was told that this was normal procedure for all four stations in the Ghana Community Radio Network.⁶³

For the conclusion of this paper, here's a little puzzle: What do these three stories have in common?

- 1) In 2002, I was invited to give a speech to the BC Campus-Community Radio Association, about internal democracy in stations. I used several examples from the local papers, and made the statement that democracy can be faked, democracy can be subverted, but what's harder to fake or to subvert is relationships.
- 2) In Ghana in 2003, Wilna Quarmyne, one of the founders of Radio Ada, said that when she and her husband first founded the station, they didn't feel they could just turn it over to the community to run democratically, because the same people who controlled all the other stuff in the community would just grab it. She said what they had to do was to involve people from the community in the station, and build in them a sense of ownership.⁶⁴
- 3) At the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2002, I visited a youth radio station that had been set up for the duration of the conference. There was a sign prominently displayed, and Brazilian popular education activist Moema Viezzer translated it for me as: "A microphone is not a piss pot."

Answer:

⁶² "Ghana: Radio Ada Goes on the Air," on web page <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x6721e/x6721e30.htm> accessed March 14, 2004

⁶³ N.B.: "We are not using the violent methods of the system but are looking for other ways to change it from within." – Genevieve Vaughan, *For-Giving*, p. 23

⁶⁴ See also Wilna W. Quarmyne, "A *Kente* Approach to Community Radio Training: Weaving Training into the Community Empowerment Process," on the web page <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x6721e/x6721e30.htm> accessed March 16, 2004. In this article, Quarmyne describes a "practical, hands-on approach" with four elements:

- Knowing self
- Knowing community
- Knowing development, and
- Knowing media.

The answer to the puzzle is all these examples point to the fact that community radio is a gift, and gift-giving is a transitive activity.⁶⁵ Givers and recipients are by definition in relationship. The act of giving is complete when the recipient is able to use the gift, and that use makes the gift their own. I titled this paper "Radio: Gifts of Sound," but community radio is not only a gift of sound, it's also a gift of voice. But on radio you don't speak just to relieve yourself, you give your voice as a gift to meet others' needs.

⁶⁵ Vaughan in For-Giving, p. 36: "giftgiving is transitive"