

Edward S. Herman: Master of Dissent (1925-2017)

By [Jeff Cohen](#)

Global Research, November 15, 2017

[FAIR](#) 14 November 2017

*One of the greatest and sweetest media critics ever, Edward S. Herman, has passed away. Ed was the main author of *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, written with Noam Chomsky—the 1980s masterwork that exposed how elite US media typically function as propaganda organs for US empire and militarism.*

In 1984, when I was part of a lawyers' delegation monitoring an "election" in death squad-run El Salvador, I remember a gaggle of progressive attorneys at the Salvador Sheraton tussling with each other to get their hands on a shipment of hot-off-the-press copies of *Demonstration Elections*, Ed's devastating book (with Frank Brodhead) on the US "staging" elections as PR shows to prop up repressive puppet regimes, from the Dominican Republic to Vietnam to Salvador.

He also wrote or co-wrote such classic works of political and media criticism as *The Political Economy of Human Rights* (with Chomsky); *The Real Terror Network*; *Beyond Hypocrisy: Decoding the News in an Age of Propaganda*; and *The Global Media* (with Robert McChesney).

A longtime friend and supporter of FAIR, he wrote "By Any Means Necessary: The Ultra-Relativism of the **Wall Street Journal** Editorial Page" ([9-10/95](#)) and "Good and Bad Genocide: Double Standards in Coverage of Suharto and Pol Pot" ([9-10/98](#)) for FAIR's magazine **Extra!**.

A highpoint of my life was flying with Ed across the Atlantic to Brussels to speak alongside him before the European Parliament on the problem of media conglomeration, a hearing organized by the European Greens.

As happened too often, Ed's name went unmentioned in the 1997 movie *Good Will Hunting*; when Will (Matt Damon) says to his therapist (Robin Williams) that [Howard Zinn's](#) *People's History* is a book that will "fuckin' knock you on your ass," the therapist responds: "Better than Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent*?"

I asked Ed if he felt left out. Not at all—the movie "will bring our book more attention, more readers." Pure Ed.

Jeff Cohen is the founder of FAIR. He's now the founding director of the Park Center for Independent Media at Ithaca College.

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