

Monstrous AT&T/Time Warner Merger

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Federal courts are supremely pro-business, including the nation's highest one throughout its history.

The nation's first Supreme Court chief justice John Jay arrogantly said America should be run by the people who own it. The nation's second president John Adams said the rich, well born and able should rule.

The Supreme Court's 1886 ruling in Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railway was arguably the most infamous one high court history – granting corporations legal personhood.

Henceforth, corporate predators have had the same rights as people, not the responsibilities. Limited liability exempts them.

The words “Equal Justice Under Law” adorning the Supreme Court's west facade, along with its “Justice, the Guardian of Liberty” motto facing east reflect a travesty of what judicial fairness is supposed to be all about.

Since the High Court's 1789 establishment, it's been supremely deferential to wealth, power and privilege. “We the people” means powerful interests exclusively.

Ordinary folks don't matter, less today than ever in the modern era. Federal district and appeals courts are ideologically similar to the Supremes.

Privilege always counted most in America. Egalitarian principles exist in name only. Checks and balances, equity and justice, as well as democratic values are meaningless figures of speech.

America is run by men and to a much lesser degree by ideologically likeminded women – not laws or high moral standards.

Executive, congressional, and judicial officials systematically lie, connive, and pretty much do what they please for their own self-interest.

Democracy is pure fantasy. Most High Court and other federal judges are as unprincipled and deferential to powerful interests exclusively as political officials in Washington, states and local governments.

On Tuesday, US District Court Judge Richard Leon approved the monstrous At&T/Time Warner merger without imposing conditions.

The Justice Department suit to block the merger failed. It's likely a done deal despite

Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim, saying:

“We will closely review the Court’s opinion and consider next steps in light of our commitment to preserving competition for the benefit of American consumers” the Trump regime doesn’t give a hoot about.

The 1996 Telecommunications Act, deregulating communication industries, paved the way for greater consolidation, less competition, less concern about diversity and choice, as well as higher profits at the expense of consumer-friendly policies.

At the time, Vice President Al Gore deceitfully called the measure an “early Christmas present for the consumers.” Its fallout was polar opposite.

Media scholar/critic Robert McChesney called the law “a farce...written by the lobbyists for the communication firms it affects.”

Nearly everything touted about the measure was false – more proof that politicians lie. Nothing they say should be believed.

Consumers got higher, not lower prices. Industries supporting the legislation claimed it would create 1.5 million new jobs. By 2003, half a million were lost through consolidation.

Media scholar Victor Pickard earlier said the proposed AT&T/Time Warner merger would “create a media behemoth with dangerous concentrations of political and economic power,” adding:

“With one corporation controlling so much production and distribution of news and entertainment media, this vertical integration poses significant potential hazards for millions of consumers...It raises serious antitrust concerns.”

Approving it represents a colossal press freedom affront, exacerbated by gutting Net Neutrality if the FCC’s ruling stands.

It assures another wave of telecom and media consolidation, a boon for corporate control and profit-making, a dagger in the heart of press freedom – digital democracy threatened.

FreePress.net said: “Forget Ma Bell.” The AT&T/Time Warner merger is “Monster Bell” – nearly three times the size of the huge 2011 Comcast/NBC Universal deal.

The AT&T/Time Warner merger is valued at over \$107 billion, including \$22 billion in debt AT&T will assume, increasing its debt burden to over \$350 billion, perhaps making it too-big-to-fail like banking and other corporate giants.

Following the deal’s approval, FreePress.net’s Matt Wood explained it’s hugely anti-consumer and anti-press freedom.

“Now that AT&T is free for the time being of all federal Net Neutrality obligations, there is literally nothing stopping it from using its power in the broadband market to discriminate and favor its own content and services,” he said, adding:

"With the dismantling of the FCC's 2015 privacy protections, a combined AT&T-Time Warner will be able to surveil its customers across the entire internet and target ads to them in ways that even Google and Facebook would be hard-pressed to match."

"This merger will further strengthen AT&T's overall market power, making it far more difficult for rivals to compete against it in any of its business lines."

"Today is a bad day for all internet users and media consumers. The Justice Department's failure to bring a winnable case will now set off a wave of communications and media consolidation that was unthinkable even a few years ago."

"All of us, regardless of our broadband carrier and no matter what we watch, are about to see higher bills, fewer choices, worse quality for competing options and a further erosion of our privacy rights."

Unless overturned by Supreme Court rulings, ending Net Neutrality and the AT&T/Time Warner merger could kill digital democracy in America – the last frontier of press freedom.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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