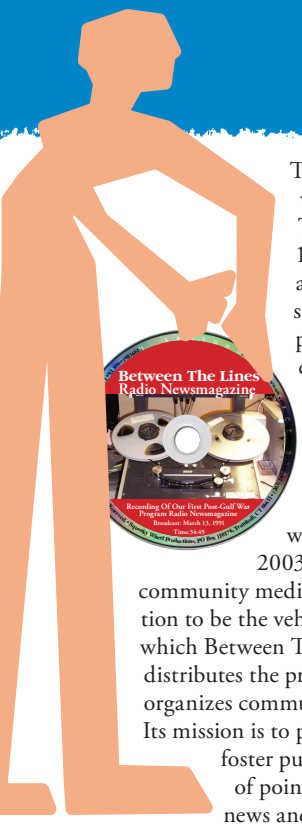
squeaky wheel productions

2006 ANNUAL REPORT

Squeaky Wheel Productions, Inc. is a nonprofit community media organization whose mission is to promote and foster public awareness of points of view, news and information — generally ignored or marginalized in the media — in order to encourage a more just and democratic global community

2006: Between The Lines Program 15th Anniversary Year



The year 2006 was Between The Lines' 15th year as an all-volunteer staffed radio program and community media organization. Squeaky Wheel Productions was founded in 2003 as a nonprofit community media organization to be the vehicle through which Between The Lines distributes the program and organizes community events. Its mission is to promote and foster public awareness of points of views, news and information — generally ignored or marginalized in the media — in order to encourage a more just and democratic global community.

BTL began producing the show just before the beginning of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, when President George H.W. Bush initiated the first U.S. war against Iraq. Our goal at the time was to report on stories about that conflict that were not being told in the U.S. press — stories about Washington's cozy pre-war relationship and arms sales to Saddam Hussein; false intelligence used to justify the war; and America's use of weapons of mass destruction — such as depleted uranium that still today are being used, resulting in birth defects, cancer and the deaths of Iraqi civilians and U.S. soldiers. At the conclusion of the Gulf War, the producers made a decision to continue the program, but with a broader focus, covering issues corporate media ignored or marginalized.

During our 15 years of broadcasting, we've reported on the crisis in U.S. health care; the growing disparity in wealth across America; the dangers of bio-technology; the U.S. role in the overthrow of Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide; and the Bush administration's failed attempt to depose Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. We've also devoted substantial amounts of coverage to the international opposition to neo-liberal economic and free trade policies pushed by Washington — and the lack of policies seriously addressing the U.S. energy crisis and the environmental danger posed by global warming. Since 9/11, we've reported on the Bush administration's manipulation of the media to pave the way for the illegal war in Iraq, and the White House assault on international law, and the U.S. Constitution.

The Urgent Need for Independent Progressive Media

Since the Telecommunications Act of 1996 weakened media ownership regulations resulting in the narrowing of viewpoints on the airwaves, corporate media conglomerates have become a virtual monopoly in broadcast media, with a handful of corporations able to control radio, TV, print media, as well as major film and book publishing houses.

Radio programming in particular is overwhelmingly slanted to the right with more than 90 percent of all talk shows hosted by conservative commentators. Programming with a progressive slant tends to be heard only on independent, noncommercial radio stations, often with all-volunteer producers. Although the Internet is viewed as a place where all ideas can compete on a level playing field, some corporate interests are now campaigning to eliminate net neutrality, the protocol which allows content providers equal access to reach their target audiences.

Between The Lines Program Highlights

In 2006, Between The Lines continued to focus much of our coverage through featured interviews on issues related to the Iraq war; President Bush's war on terrorism; the erosion of civil liberties and the rule of law in the U.S. and growing income inequality in America.

Additional reporting was devoted to reproductive rights issues in the U.S. and Latin America with special attention to the anti-abortion referendum in South Dakota and the Senate confirmation of Justice Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court; environmental issues, including global warming; and a series of reports on the troubled rebuilding effort in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans.

Our weekly summary of underreported news covered the conflicts in Somalia, Ethiopia, the genocide in Darfur and the horrific death toll in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Coverage of Africa also included reports on the ongoing impact of AIDS on the continent.

BTL kept an eye on the growing debate over energy alternatives. We looked at bio-fuels, renewable energy and the impact of oil interests on U.S. foreign policy. The news summary also continued to cover developments in the American political scene with special attention on the Christian Right-GOP alliance; various statewide ballot questions and new strategies for progressives.

Topic Summary

Following are some highlights of BTL's reporting during the year, by topic:

Immigration

- Organizing behind the massive immigrant protest May 1st
- Anti-immigrant groups ties to racist hate groups
- Unions' embrace of immigrants as a possible antidote to labor's decline
- NAFTA's role in Mexican immigration to the U.S.

U.S. Politics

- Ned Lamont vs. Joseph Lieberman primary challenge in Connecticut
- Minority voter suppression in Florida and Ohio
- Major flaws in electronic voting
- Conservative churches' illegal political activity

Reproductive Rights

- South Dakota anti-abortion referendum
- Federal approval of the Morning After Pill
- Bush appointment of anti-contraception activist for federal family planning office

Environment

- U.S. Parks infrastructure budget cuts
- Interior Secretary Gale Norton resignation after weakening protections for public lands
- Global warming's influence on insurance industry projections
- "Footprint" project measuring human consumption and resources
- Bush administration distortion of science
- Labor-Blue Green alliance for protecting jobs and environment
- Bush attempt to overturn Wilderness Roadless rule halted by federal court
- Climate change activist Bill McKibben's national global warming "Step it Up" campaign

Iran

- Iran's nuclear research goals
- Pentagon's Iran attack contingency planning
- Likelihood of massive civilian casualties from tactical U.S. nuclear weapons
- Scott Ritter on U.S. war plans against Iran

Afghanistan

- Taliban resurgence

Iraq

- Shiite mosque bombing escalates violence/civil war
- U.S. veterans/soldiers advocate troop withdrawal within year
- Flawed media coverage
- Rise of death squads increase likelihood of civil war
- Iraqi women tour of U.S. call for end of occupation
- Iraq war and environment
- Haditha massacre
- Effect Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi death's on war

Between The Lines Program Highlights

- Iraqi parliamentarians and U.S. peace activists promotion of U.S. withdrawal timetable
- Iraq diverts attention from war on terror
- Assessment of Iraq Study group from military families opposing war
- Pentagon' education benefits misinformation to National Guard and Reserve soldiers

Valerie Plame – Lewis Libby Trial

- Bush and Cheney's jeopardy in investigation

Christian Right

- President Bush's stem cell research veto

Military Spending

- Study: 42 cents of each tax dollar allocated for military spending

Civil Liberties

- Amnesty International on U.S. torture
- Long history of U.S. torture preceding current Pentagon abuse scandals
- Calls for Guantanamo detention camp closure after suicides
- Librarians challenging Patriot Act
- Presidential signing statements undermining rule of law
- Top Pentagon officials' opposition to Bush military tribunal law
- Military Commissions Act a disaster for human rights
- U.S. spying on anti-war groups
- Department of Justice officials' skepticism on domestic spying legality
- Lower court ruling on government wiretaps' unconstitutionality
- Bush's approval of federal legislation expanding power to declare martial law

Death Penalty

- Several states' moratoriums on death penalty

Darfur

- Ongoing genocide in Darfur
- Environmental factor of desertification on conflict
- Calls for international intervention
- Campus divestment campaign against Sudan

World's Women and Poverty

- Genital mutilation
- Rights of women sacrificed for Big Oil
- Simple, cheap measures for saving children's lives
- Latin American women's gains for safe, legal abortion

Latin America

- The Left's electoral victories across Latin America
- Coverage of Mexico's disputed presidential election
- Oaxaca, Mexico civil society uprising, violence, solidarity actions
- New Haitian President Preval under economic and political pressure from Washington
- After Augusto Pinochet's death in Chile, probe of Orlando Letelier's 1976 assassination Election of Evo Morales as Bolivia's first indigenous President
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- Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's controversial speech at United Nations

Israeli Palestinian

- New hardline Palestinian Hamas government's isolation by the West
- Sanctions against Hamas, and harm to innocents
- Ramifications of Israel's policies on Gaza and Lebanon
- U.S,-Israeli partnership in Lebanon war
- Qana massacre in Lebanon
- Civilians' losses in Israeli attack on Lebanon
- U.S. progressive Jewish group 's peace talks effort
- U.S. first strike attack team in Israel
- U.S. tour of former Israeli and Palestinians fighters
- Hamas – Fatah unity government post-Gaza massacre

New Orleans, Louisiana

- Opposition to house demolitions
- Post-flood toxic sediment hazard
- Plan to demolish NOLA public housing
- Reconstruction effort neglects millions

U.S. Income Inequality

- Erosion of middle class
- Bush tax cuts benefit to wealthy, harm to nation
- Likelihood minimum wage increase will aid working poor
- Welfare reform harm to poor women and children
- CEO pay rises in oil and defense industry, decrease in worker pay
- Budget's permanent tax cuts and slashed social programs rewards to rich

Impeachable Offenses

- Former Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman's argument for Bush impeachment
- Lewis Lapham's warning of President Bush's attack on U.S. Constitution
- Journalist David Lindorff and constitutional lawyer Barbara Olshansky's legal argument for impeachment
- Grassroots impeachment campaign launched around U.S.

Net Neutrality

- National campaign to preserve free and equal access to Internet

Between The Lines Production Crew

Executive producer: Scott Harris

Segment production: Scott Harris, Melinda Tuhus, Denise Manzari

News writing: Bob Nixon, Denise Manzari

News copyediting: Chris Ferrio

Program narration: Denise Manzari, Ruben Abreu, Indu Anand, Bill Cosentino, Prue Cullen, Elaine Osowski

Distribution: Anna Manzo, Bill Cosentino, Jeff Yates

Web editing/production: Anna Manzo, Jeff Yates

Newswire editing: Hank Hoffman

Photo editing: Scott Harris, Anna Manzo

Activist Resources

Each week's program offers resources on the issues we cover. Every interview segment features phone numbers, email addresses and website links to facilitate contact between our audience and groups taking a stand on critical issues of the day.

Newswire

In 2003, a newswire was added to the website, which regularly features articles with special focus on Iraq war-related issues: U.S. Politics, Bush Regime, American Empire/ War Profiteering, "Postwar" Occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan, Civil Liberties/Human Rights, Media Issues, and Activism. Many of these articles are added to the Weekly Summary and Q&A transcripts to provide additional resources to our audience.

Distribution

BTL is distributed to over 40 radio stations each week. We utilize the Pacifica Radio Network Ku satellite system; RSS-podcast feeds; MP3 downloads via anonymous FTP and our own BTL website; as well as the A-Infos Radio Project website at radio4all.net and the Pacifica Radio Network website Audioport.org.

BTL's website invites listeners to join two listservs. Subscribers receive weekly program summaries and/or interview transcripts with RealAudio links. BTL listservs currently provide this free service to over 1,200 subscribers weekly. Our interview transcripts have been published and archived online by other news media and activist groups internationally. In 2005, we began offering podcasts from our site, which drew an average 14,000 downloads of our program from the site monthly during 2006. We also have an RSS feed via radio4all.net.

Distribution of Between The Lines to 40 radio stations and radio webcasts has been holding steady in the United States and Canada with additional weekly posting of program summaries to 30 Independent Media Centers around the globe.

The White Rose Society began recording, archiving and podcasting Scott Harris' live 2-hour program "Counterpoint," broadcast on WPKN Radio. The program features the long form interviews from which many of Between The Lines' segments are excerpted.

Squeaky Wheel Productions Community Events

In 2006, Between The Lines' producers and volunteers organized four public events in addition to producing and distributing audio and video recordings of our public forums through the duplication of audio CDs, video DVDs, syndicated radio broadcasts and posting material on streaming Internet sites such as Google Video and YouTube.

Public Forums and Fundraisers

- **"The Case for Impeachment: The Legal Argument for Removing George W. Bush from Office," with Investigative journalist David Lindorff and Center for Constitutional Rights attorney Barbara Olshansky, June 24,**

George W. Bush, which include: making false claims to justify the Iraq War, torture and abuse of prisoners in U.S. custody, the holding of American citizens and foreign nationals without charge, trial or access to attorneys and the unlawful warrantless surveillance of U.S. citizens. The speeches were recorded for audio and video broadcast.

- **"Democracy in Danger: Oil Wars, Corporate Power, Terrorism and the Struggle to Defend Liberty and Justice," with BBC-TV investigative reporter Greg Palast and Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting founder Jeff Cohen, Oct. 7, 2006**

Greg Palast, and Jeff Cohen, were the keynote speakers at a BTL/SWP October 2006 fundraiser. Cohen has also been a commentator on CNN, Fox and MSNBC. Between The Lines also presented a "Democracy in Action Award" to Connecticut librarians Barbara Bailey, Peter Chase, George Christian and Janet Nocek — board members of "The Library Connection, Inc." for effectively challenging the provisions of the USA Patriot Act which undermine the U.S. Constitution. An after-talk reception and silent auction was held at the John Slade Ely House. The talks were also recorded for audio and video broadcast.

- **"Troubadours for Peace: A Music Benefit for BTL-SWP", July 9, 2006**

Connecticut musicians The Furors, The Sawtelles, Hygiene Wilder and Between The Lines' very own Hank Hoffman, gave performances at a summer fundraiser benefiting Squeaky Wheel Productions at "Café 9," a popular live music New Haven venue.

- **"The Crisis in Media and the Growing Movement for Media Democracy," A Workshop organized at the January 2006 World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela, Jan. 26, 2006**

Between The Lines' producers, Scott Harris and Anna Manzo collaborated with Toward Freedom, a nonprofit media organization based in Burlington, Vermont, to organize a joint panel titled, "The Crisis in Media and the Growing Movement for Media Democracy," at the World Social Forum in Caracas Venezuela. The panel included Venezuelan American lawyer Eva Gollinger, sociologist Gregory Wilpert, former Haitian ambassador at large to President Jean Bertrand Aristide Ben Dupuy, Venezuelan community radio producer Gustavo Borges, Cuban writer Teresa Valdez and Z Magazine Editor Michael Albert. An audio recording of the panel was distributed for broadcast and used as a fundraising premium item for donors to both Toward Freedom and Squeaky Wheel Productions. Z Magazine produced and distributed a video recording of the BTL-TF panel.

Special Program Distribution

The distribution of audio CD and video DVD recordings of our community events and special programs assists BTL in reaching new audiences, as well as generating small amounts of revenue.

- **"Parallel Deceptions: The Bush Agenda for War in Iraq and Iran"**

In January 2006, Squeaky Wheel Productions began distribution of "Parallel Deceptions: The Bush Agenda for War in Iraq and Iran," a talk by former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter, recorded in September 2005. The speech was distributed in audio CD and video DVD formats. The audio was distributed to our over 40 affiliate radio stations and offered as premiums for fundraising. The video was uploaded for viewing on Google Video.

- **"The Case for Impeachment: The Legal Argument for Removing George W. Bush from Office"** In October, the Case for Impeachment speeches were distributed in audio CD and video DVD. The audio was distributed to 40+ affiliate radio stations and offered as premiums for fundraising at non-commercial radio stations. Ten affiliate radio stations broadcast the program, including one in Canada, as did three public access TV stations in Connecticut. The video of the program was uploaded to Google Video, and YouTube.

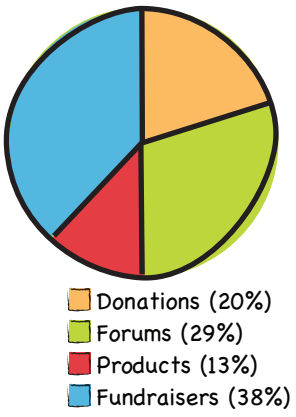
- **A Radio Play: "Inquisitions (and Other Un-American Activities)"**

For May Day 2006, BTL/SWP distributed the radio play "Inquisitions (and Other Un-American Activities)", written and directed by Greg Guma, former editor of Toward Freedom, a nonprofit media organization based in Burlington, Vermont. The play dramatizes the struggle for workers rights and civil liberties by telling the story of the police interrogation of activist Lucy Parsons during the 1919 Palmer raids. This audio drama relates the history of the movement for an eight-hour workday, the Haymarket bombing, and the government's execution by hanging of four activists. The 120-minute play was distributed by Squeaky Wheel Productions, and broadcast by Pacifica Radio Network affiliates.

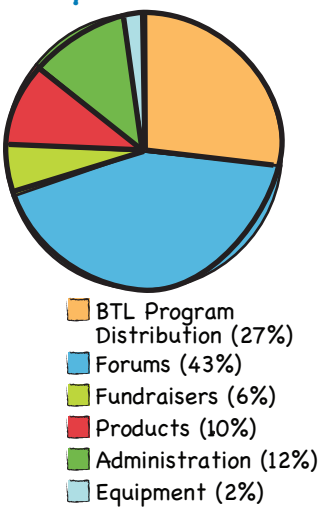
Income – Expenses

We've achieved many of our goals in 2006 through the support of volunteers and donors. Because we have no administrative staff, but rely on in-kind services and contributions, our expenses for overhead was less than 12% of our total operating budget. Additionally, the pre-production, production, and post-production/distribution of Between The Lines is made possible by the in-kind contribution of approximately 2,000 volunteer hours a year, as well as in-kind contributions of WPKN's studio and phone costs. The estimated value of these in-kind contributions is $150,000 annually.

Income



Expenditures



Squeaky Wheel Productions Board of Directors – 2006

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