

**THE BLOG**

When Is a Slap-Down a Slam-Dunk?

By Marty Kaplan

12/15/2006 10:36 am ET | Updated May 25, 2011

When it comes from the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page.

The *WSJ's* Hanukah gift to FCC Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein is a bit of a pistol-whipping for their insistence that the proposed AT&T-BellSouth merger doesn't create a company that extorts protection money from Web sites that want fast access to your computer.

The paper says that the two Democrats on the FCC "are carrying water for rich special interests" — *hello? Wall Street Journal editorial page?* if you don't set the standard for water-carrying for the beleaguered rich, who does? — and for "the rabble-rousing left wingers at MoveOn.org." It will come as something of a surprise to Brent Bozell's Parents Television Council, Instapundit's Glenn Reynolds, the League of Women Voters of Connecticut and the American Library Association — among other members of the Save the Internet Coalition — that they are actually pinko agit-propsters.

The *Journal* also bemoans the money it will cost AT&T to lay fat pipes for the speedier internet of the future — conveniently ignoring the billions in breaks that the government has already given AT&T and other telecom behemoths in order to do just that... and which, lawdy, they somehow have failed to do. The *Journal* says - surprise! - that regulation is bad, and that only a market solution will work. Gee, I guess they're right, I mean, it was the private sector that created the internet in the first place. (What? It was the federal government?) Well, surely markets are the fair way to set prices, I mean, that's why I can switch my cable provider whenever I want from Time Warner to Cox to Comcast — jeez, that's a monopoly? Next thing I know, you'll be telling me that my local phone company's a monopoly, too.

Oh.

Commissioners Copps and Adelstein are national heroes. They have resisted tremendous pressure from the communications industry to do their jobs, which is serving as the trustees of the American people. Ever since the Reagan-era wave of hooray!-the-market-solves-everything deregulation — his FCC commissioner called a television just "a toaster with pictures" — the industry has done everything it could to undermine the notion that there is such a thing called "the public interest" in the media. Happily, the Courts, including — until now, anyway — the Supreme Court, have shot down each industry attempt to eject the public's interest from the media policy process.

And so, too, have Copps and Adelstein been standing guard. They've been a lonely minority on the Commission, but in January they gain powerful allies in new Congressional committee chairmen whose knees don't jerk when the Wall Street Journal's editorial page whacks them with a hammer.

The *WSJ's* attack is a badge of honor. Nice going, guys. Wear it proudly.

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Marty Kaplan 

USC Annenberg professor and Norman Lear Center director