

Look back, move forward

In his 3-05-09 post "[Probe the Past to Protect the Future](#)," Washington DC business-advocate- returned-investigative journalist Andrew Kreig says that the idea that the country should look forward without addressing the wrongs of the recent past is "nonsense".

He writes: As always, justice starts by a review of the evidence. 'Sunshine is the best disinfectant,' Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously said. But pest control is useful too. Either way, strong measures are required to build public confidence for legitimate initiatives on such complex questions as which companies are "too big to fail," and which ones should pay the price for their terrible decisions."

The media are unlikely provide much insight, he implies.

Their income stream is increasingly dependent on affiliated businesses and not on serving subscribers. The major TV networks, for instance, make virtually nothing from direct customer billings via cable and satellite, although many in the public naively assume that they're being served via a "marketplace of ideas."

In fact, traditional and new media alike depend heavily on the goodwill of government officials, plus advertising. The financial reports of the Washington Post, for instance, show that since 2007, it has been making more than ten times its revenue from its education industry affiliates as from its Post subscriptions, new media are more entrepreneurial and increasingly broader-based in consumer appeal, many of their roots are in fairly recent federal Internet research and privatization policy—and many of their futures are highly dependent on favorable regulation, merger approval and stimulus spending.

Kreig calls for transparency in the Obama Administration's

decisionmaking process and for vigorous public pressure to ensure that current Congressional investigations into allegations of Bush Administration wrong-doing are not just for show.

I'm not anxious to delve back into the murky recent past and don't relish the possibility of investigations, indictments, or imprisonments. By temperament, like Obama, I'd rather move forward and let it all go. But as George Santayana said, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." I do think it's important to find out why things went so wrong in hopes that we never have to go through times like those—or these—again.

AMH

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