Moving onto the Airwaves

BY: T.J. Lasse and Stephen Paulik

What are we gonna do? We live in a total media propaganda environment controlled by four or five corporations.

We sent all these letters, emails, and faxes to Congress, and it didn’t change anything.

Yeah, and we continue to fund those $250,000 TV ads… what did we get?

NADA.

What are we gonna do?

We need a total media propaganda environment controlled by four or five corporations.

We need to create our own community radio station.

Let’s put our own FM broadcast station on the air to inform and organize our community.

What if we create a community radio station? In this way, we can create a community radio station.

Let’s put in a free radio station! All in favor?

Yes.

Let’s do it!

Count me in.

I’m in. Me too!

Yes.

A basic 10 watt radio can reach a radius of 6-8 miles over average terrain. With 10 watts, you can reach about 1000-1500 people at 6-8 miles, that’s one whole town.

How do we learn to do this?

An organization called Free Radio Berkeley has won a key player in the free radio movement. We can set up a computer with CDs or radio loops, which can be purchased from their website. They’ll manufacture and ship a complete rig of kits and equipment. There are also other sources of equipment available. Just search the web using the terms “free radio,” “radio broadcasting,” or “FM.

There is an incredible amount of material available on the Internet, such as the radio for all (www.radical.net) give thousands of programs available there for free. We can build a computer with lots of MP3 files and use it like an automated jukebox. This is how we have local shows mixed with other material.

I say we move for consensus on this and do it. It’s the only way we can break the stranglehold of corporate broadcast media. Let’s build us a free radio station! All in favor?

Yes.

Whoa! Isn’t that illegal?

Not if it’s a free radio station, sometimes called pirate radio.

Yes, that is the government’s opinion. Consider it to be an act of electronic civil disobedience and an act of free speech, the airwaves are a commons that have been fenced off and appropriated by corporate interests. Free radio is an act of repossession.

Umm, isn’t that illegal?

Whoa! Isn’t that illegal?
The FCC doesn't care about guns. You don't have to worry about getting clubbed with a riot stick, pepper sprayed, and hauled off to jail on fake charges.

FCC MOTHER F**KER, LURK DOWN!

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THEY SHOW UP AT THE DOOR?

WHAT ABOUT LOGISTICS AND HOW DO WE SET UP?

First off, the FCC doesn't have the staff, resources, or budget to deal with a large number of unsanctioned stations going onto the airwaves. It would overwhelm them, and there are hundreds and thousands of small stations like ours across the country.

Generally, they will show up with a seizure order and federal marshals to execute it. That means they'll take away your equipment. But this is very rare and only happens as an orchestrated show to discourage other folks.

Home sweet home.

Hey, quit it, Love, FCC

Make sure you get a good sign.

At worst case, they will show up with a seizure order and federal marshals to execute it. That means they'll take away your equipment. But this is very rare and only happens as an orchestrated show to discourage other folks.

I see.

The FCC just ends up chasing the transmitter all over town. Wa, ha, ha!

Just don't let them in. Unless they have a search or seizure warrant. Never use your real name in conjunction with the radio station. Not having any names to place on legal documents makes it much more difficult for them.

They can threaten fines, but they have done little more than that. They would have to engage in court procedures to actually collect them. With this financially challenged crowd most of you are pretty much judgment-proof anyway.

It's best to separate the studio from the transmitter.

The studio sends out a high bit rate audio stream via a cable, DSL or WiFi connection. The transmitter is located at another house or building and receives the audio stream fed from a computer running up the stream.

Oh, I got it. If they bust the transmitter that's all they get. Plus maybe a throw away computer.

Ridiculous. If we have a list of people willing to host the transmitter and the FCC shows up with a piece of paper the transmitter can move to the next location. This begins the legal game and they have to start over again because the process is tied to the physical address.

All right, let's say we take whatever risk is involved. What's it gonna cost and who are we gonna deal with the technical aspects?

I doubt we have any broadcast engineers in our crowd.