

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July XX, 2004

Dear Mr. Murdoch:

In light of several recent reports that Fox News tailors its coverage of news to promote the Republican Party, we write to register our strong concern that news broadcast over the public airwaves be fair and impartial.

Mr. Murdoch, as the owner of Fox News, as well as numerous satellite, cable, and local television stations, newspapers, and radio networks, you are responsible for keeping the American people informed about the important issues facing them. Yet, as documented in the new Robert Greenwald film, *Outfoxed*, it seems clear that the Fox News network has a deliberate bias in favor of, and often serves as an extension of, the Republican Party's policies and ideology. As the owner of Fox, we strongly encourage you to actively intervene to eliminate this unfair and unbalanced coverage.

Studies of Fox News programming reveal a consistently high percentage of conservative and Republican guests and experts, with a lack of representation from guests who espouse moderate or progressive views. For instance, a report recently released by Fair and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) found that Fox's *Special Report with Brit Hume* overwhelmingly favors interviews with conservatives and Republicans. In fact, FAIR found a five-to-one ratio of guests with conservative viewpoints as opposed to those with progressive points of view.

It is also deeply troubling to learn that Fox News executives send memos to Fox reporters pushing certain political perspectives on important events. For instance, memos written by John Moody, a Senior Vice President and news editor for Fox News, reveal a conscious policy of providing political support for President Bush, his administration, and its policies. On such partisan issues as the war in Iraq, the President's tax cuts for the wealthy, the President's judicial nominees, and abortion, Fox News consistently directs its reporters to advance Republican policies and uniformly expresses its support for the administration.

For example, in a May 9, 2003, memo, Mr. Moody told Fox reporters how to approach the contentious battle over judicial nominees in the U.S. Senate:

Let's spend a good deal of time on the battle over judicial nominations, which the President will address this morning. Nominees who both sides admit are qualified are being held up because of the POSSIBLE, not demonstrated, views on one issue—abortion. This should be a trademark issue for FNC today and in the days to come.

In a May 22, 2003, memo, Mr. Moody wrote the following about the recently-passed tax cut:

The tax cut passed last night by the Senate, though less than half what Bush originally proposed, contains some important victories for the administration. The DC crew will parse the bill and explain how it will fatten—marginally—your wallet.

In another instance, on June 3, 2003, Mr. Moody told reporters to celebrate the President while denigrating his opponents on the difficult issues in the Middle East:

It's a distinctly skeptical crowd that Bush faces. His political courage and tactical cunning are worth noting in our reporting through the day.

As a consequence of partial and skewed reporting by Fox News, a recent study "Misperceptions, The Media, and the Iraq War" by the Program on International Policy Attitudes revealed that those Americans whose predominant news source was Fox News were *more* likely to be misinformed than other Americans. Those watching Fox News rather than other networks have misperceptions about the war in Iraq, believing untruths about the evidence of links between Iraq and Al-Qaeda and the 'discovery' of weapons of mass destruction Iraq. The report suggests that the one-sided, partisan reporting of Fox News has the effect of improving the President's standing with the American people on the basis of not news, but of disinformation.

The responsibility of the media is to report the news in an unbiased, impartial, and objective manner. We believe that when Fox News promulgates the White House message of the day through its news programming, it reveals partisan support for right-wing view points, a partisan preference for the Republican Party, and a partisan allegiance to the Republican agenda. When it instructs its reporters to concentrate on the Bush message, it subverts and undermines democratic debate.

To be truly "Fair and Balanced," Fox News must abandon its role as a proxy for the Republican Party's communications office. Reporters at Fox News should be allowed to report the news as it happens, not as President Bush wants the American people to believe it happened.

Given the importance of this issue, we look forward to meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss our concerns. Please have your office contact Rebecca Raiser at (202) 225-4115 to schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress

Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress