

pick about the adequacy of the Bell companies' efforts to open up local markets before they are allowed to enter long distance. The Division usually comes down on the side that more regulation is needed, not that the markets should be unchained.

This stance bodes ill for future Division actions on telecom. It also raises a distressing possibility that an industrial policy mindset will be engrafted onto analysis of efforts to restructure the media world to reflect the realities of new technologies, especially because Michael Katz, the AAG (Economics), is a former chief economist for the FCC under Chairman Reed Hundt, a man whose view of the proper role of the regulator is stunningly expansive.

The special section for "networks and technology" also rings an alarm. The antitrust establishment loves a theory called "network externalities" (a.k.a. "path dependence" or "lock-in"). The problem is that disinterested analysis shows that the examples usually used to support this theory are embarrassingly wrong, and much of it is merely good old economies-of-scale in new clothes. See, for example, *Dismal Science Fictions* by Stan Liebowitz and Stephen Margolis, published by the Cato Institute, and "Is Heightened Scrutiny Appropriate for Software Markets?" by current FTC Chairman Timothy J. Muris, included in a volume on the Microsoft case published by the Progress and Freedom Foundation. The antitrust establishment enthuses over network analysis because it promises them action, power and a fountain of fees. Some useful work exists, but serious skepticism is in order, and creating a new Antitrust Division section entitled "Networks" assumes the validity of a highly debatable conclusion.

New nomenclature may seem like a mere straw in the wind, perhaps, but were I a private lawyer or economist representing high-tech companies on antitrust issues, I would order up the new Mercedes (and make it the top of the line model, too).

2002 COOGLER PRIZE FOR DAILY JOURNALISM

For PCBs to become the next mother lode to be mined by Erin Brockovich wannabes and terrorized local clients (see page 52), the press will have to do its part. It must present a titanic conflict between good and evil—between idealistic activists and malevolent corpocrats—that yields floods of new contributions and mandated government money for environmental groups. It must point to pathetic throngs of poor people withered by insidious poisons. Impoverished children dying young of mysterious diseases. Noble raptors pining pathetically over oozing eggs. If in the process it must demonize the companies and people who supplied crucial chemicals and lifesaving pharmaceuticals through World War II and the industrial boom that followed, so be it. The environment is in peril! Future Pulitzer prizes and David Brower Sierra Club Awards are at stake!

Wonderfully opportune, therefore, was a story flaunted on the front page of the *Washington Post* on January 1, 2002. Headlined "Monsanto Hid Decades of Pollution: PCBs drenched Alabama town but no one was ever told," a story of corporate malevolence and mendacity unfolds for some five thousand words of Pulitzer pathos.

After disposing of the chemicals in brooks and rivers near their plant in Anniston, Alabama, and after being alerted by scientists and environmentalists of the menace of their product, so goes the story, Monsanto executives failed to warn the residents as they callously poisoned them.

The author is a 1992 Harvard graduate in liberal arts named Michael Grunwald, winner of the Sierra Club's year 2000 David Brower Award for a series on the alleged environmental devastation inflicted on rivers by the Army Corps of Engineers. After this honor, a Pulitzer beckoned. No one could have predicted his emergence as a strong candidate for the coveted new laurels of the J. Gordon Coogler journalism prize.

Following the canonical pattern, Grunwald's bid for fame begins with gullible class-war rhetoric worthy of Janet Cooke of yore: "On the west side of Anniston, the poor side...the people ate dirt. They called it 'Alabama clay' and cooked it for extra flavor.... They didn't know that their dirt and yards and bass [fish] and kids...were all contaminated with chemicals... Fish submerged in [a creek coming from the factory] turned belly-up within 10 seconds, spurting blood and shedding skin as if dunked into boiling water."

As an opener, it surely punched and grabbed. But the poison that reportedly eviscerated the fish was apparently not PCBs but mercury, and Monsanto immediately halted its flow into the

**"How strange
are dreams!
I dreamed the
other night /
A dream that made
me tremble, /
Not with fear,
but with a kind
of strange reality: /
My supper, though
late, consisted of
no cheese."**

**J. GORDON COOGLER
(1865-1901)**

With this issue we auspicate an innovation in the venerable J. Gordon Coogler Award, named in honor of the eponymous 19th-century South Carolina printer whose shop offered "Poems Written While You Wait." Hitherto, the Coogler Committee has limited itself to honoring the Worst Book of the Year. This year, owing to an especially stupid and ill-informed newspaper piece that George Gilder discovered in the course of his liberating work on the environment, the Coogler Committee has been inspired to expand its work to the consideration of daily journalism.

This expansion is not without precedent. The Pulitzer Prizes began with only eight categories. Now they include 21, though the judges still

COOGLER: WORS

labor under the delusion that they are giving their awards for excellence. The Coog judges are more clear-sighted. They know their purpose is to acknowledge the worst, conferring our first J. Gordon Coogler Award for the Worst Journalism of the Year, we bow in celebration of Mr. Michael Grunwald, for environmental tear-jerker set in Anniston, Alabama, that is masterful in its misrepresentation of biochemistry, the Monsanto Corporation and its corporate offspring Solutia, and tastes of some rural southerners. The pi

creek. If PCBs were sufficiently soluble and reactive in water instantly to destroy fish, there would be no persistent deposits to dredge. Most of the rest of the story hinges on the claim that PCBs are deadly toxic chemicals proven carcinogenic and known to be carcinogenic for decades. Yet today PCBs are proven to be essentially benign, less carcinogenic by the established Ames test method than broccoli, peanut butter, coffee or dozens of other commonly consumed products.

In Anniston and other affected cities, however, the abolitionists are forcing the extraction of every last trace of a part per million of PCBs from playgrounds and schoolyards, where children are assumed to gather to consume them *al fresco*. Perhaps they do. But except in the huge concentrations found in small streams once directly fed with factory refuse, even fish are little affected. The decades of speculations about the tell-tale thinning of raptor eggshells, whether from DDT or PCBs, turn out to be just another urban eco-myth, refuted by voluminous evidence from ornithologists in the wilds.

After setting the Manichean scene, Grunwald proceeds to the libelous heart of his argument. Poring through huge quantities of company documents collected since the 1930s and secured through the court's discovery process, Grunwald recounts a set of salacious out-of-context quotes in which various executives explain their ruthless acts by saying things

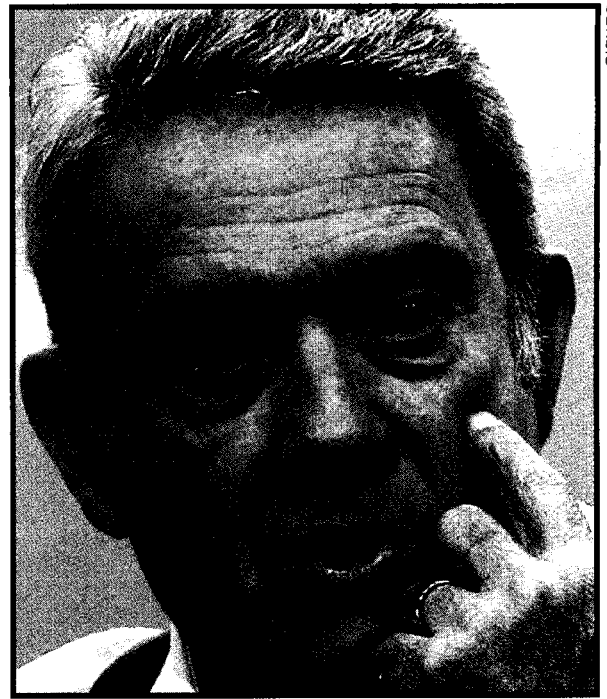
like: "We can't afford to lose one dollar of business." Or "there is no point in going to expensive extremes in limiting discharges."

Cited with inflammatory relish by Grunwald, none of the quotes from Monsanto executives are incriminating in the least, since as even the *Post* as much as admits—in paragraph 73 of 85—there is no evidence whatsoever linking PCBs to cancer in humans. The men of Monsanto were absolutely correct in their belief that they were producing a valuable product, which prevents environmentally detrimental fires and explosions in electrical equipment and which, while toxic to rats in huge doses, is innocuous in its industrial uses.

The story ends with a mendaciously menacing moral. The company's critics "warn that Monsanto, which no longer produces chemicals [driven out of the business by litigation], is now promising the world that its genetically engineered crops are safe for human consumption."

"For years these guys said PCBs were safe too," Mike Casey of the Environmental Working Group told Grunwald. "But there's obviously a corporate culture of deceiving the public." Far more accurately, he could have been referring to the environmental coverage of Michael Grunwald and the Washington Post Company.

For all these wonders of junk science sciolism, we proudly award Michael Grunwald and the *Washington Post* the first J. Gordon Coogler



COORBS

SHIPS BE SINKING

BY BERNARD GOLDBERG

Back in 1982, when a reporter asked New York Knicks guard Micheal Ray Richardson what the problem was with his last-place team, he offered up a succinct analysis. It consisted of just four simple words, but in the world of sport it has been enshrined.

"The ship be sinking," Micheal Ray said, rivaling "To be or not to be" for sheer elegance and beating it by two words for utter succinctness. And that would have been the end of it, except that another reporter asked a follow-up question.

"How far can it sink?"

Micheal (that's how he spells his name) considered the question, then put forth another four-word masterpiece.

"The sky's the limit."

Move over, Mr. Shakespeare, there is a new Bard in our midst.

These days another ship is taking on water. The network news divi-

Former CBS News correspondent Bernard Goldberg is the author of *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News*, from which this is excerpted. Copyright 2002, Regnery Publishing.

THE BUSINESS

appeared in the *Washington Post*, though it could have been *Mother Jones*.

Incidentally, along with his other crimes, Mr. Grunwald, sneers at citizens from the "poor side" of Anniston who "ate dirt." Nowhere does he acknowledge that he has encountered geophagy, dirt eating, which dates back to 40 B.C. The ancient Greeks ate various delicious clays not only for their tangy taste but also to combat various ailments. The practice was brought to America by African slaves and survives today in the rural South. Some whites in the American North sea-

son their meatloaf with dirt, as I personally have observed in at least one rustic organic restaurant near Harvard University.

So Mr. Grunwald's ignorance of geophagy is unpardonable. I would direct him to the esteemed Miss Alice Walker's essay "The Black Writer and the Southern Experience" wherein she discourses on the rural tradition of dirt eating with great judiciousness and even tenderness.

As for the alleged chemical leavening, it is unconscionable for environmentalists to continue to term them contaminants. As anti-Coogler Bill Tucker demonstrates starting on page 52, PCBs are harmless. In time they may even be recognized as health foods of a sort. Salut!

—RET