



# The Working Press

## One woman, one choice, one time.

*Feminists cheer women for taking high-profile media jobs, then jeer them for leaving them.*

GEORGE NEUMAYR

FEMINISTS CHEERED the *San Jose Mercury News* for naming its first female sports editor, Rachel Wilner. The *Mercury News* announced the appointment in June, noting with dismay that Wilner joins a distressingly small group of female sports editors across the country. At the 435 newspapers in the U.S., “only 14” women “have the top sports job,” the *Mercury News* reported. Other newspapers with female sports editors include: the *Seattle Times*, the *Kansas City Star*, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and the *Raleigh News and Observer*.

The *Merc*'s story on the appointment chalked up the paucity of female sports editors to “lifestyle issues” (that women tend not to work late and so on) and to the media's favorite bugaboo, discrimination. It found an “expert” to say: “You're dealing with organizations that are primarily male-heavy at the top and all the way through. It's the good old boys' network times 10.”

Feminists cheer women like Rachel Wilner for taking high-profile media jobs, then jeer them for leaving them. Ask Elizabeth Vargas. She ran into a storm of feminist criticism after she announced in May that she was leaving “ABC World News Tonight”'s anchor chair due to pregnancy and a desire to spend more time with her family. She has really let the team down. “Some women disappointed in ABC's Vargas,” ran one headline. So much for “choice.”

Some feminist leaders, however, took the tack of assailing ABC for not setting up a special schedule for pregnant news anchors. “We see it as a demotion,” snarled Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation. “We're worried. Is this a return to the days when it was tougher for women to get ahead?”

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*George Neumayr is California Political Review's press critic.*

Smeal and other feminist leaders fired off a letter to ABC executives, demanding that they in effect prevent Vargas from leaving (Smeal and company refuse to believe that Vargas wants to spend more time with her children and think ABC forced her out).

“This clear demotion signals a dispiriting return to the days of discrimination against women that we thought were behind us,” read the letter as reported by *Associated Press*. The letter also demanded that ABC establish a work schedule sensitive to the needs of working mothers.

Kim Grandy, president of the National Organization for Women, blasted ABC for “eliminating two of the country's most visible women role models.” Grandy was referring to Vargas and Geena Davis, the actress who played the president in the axed show, “Commander in Chief.”

Meanwhile, pepping up feminist spirits, Katie Couric is set to assume the anchorman's chair of Dan Rather, who has let it be known he remains “confused” by the uproar over his use of forged documents against George Bush. O.J.-like, Rather still searches for the real ones.



The California Legislature is capable of passing laws on anything, no matter how trivial, provided the legislation moves the ball down field for the left. In May, the Assembly felt a need to shore up the rights of “student journalists,” passing a law preventing public school officials from “censoring” content in student newspapers.

Democrat Assemblyman Leland Yee said he introduced the legislation after students informed him that a federal appeals court decision, *Hosty v. Carter*, could jeopardize their newspapers. *Hosty* held that college



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officials had the same authority over student newspapers as high school administrators. Yee didn't seem to mind that the decision, handed down by the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in an Illinois case, has no effect on California (which is under the jurisdiction of the *Ninth* U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals).

**T**HE ASSEMBLYMAN *does* seem to mind that student newspaper "free speech" legislation could protect the work of politically incorrect college journalists. His bill carved out a gaping loophole to allow censorship of "hate speech." Anyone care to wager how that will be defined by college administrators?



Blogs are increasingly becoming a form of self-defense for individuals and institutions that not so long ago were at the mercy of the dominant mainstream media. Take, for example, the Los Angeles Police Department. After enduring decades of hostile media coverage, the LAPD set up a blog in May to counteract tendentious journalists.

"I see the blog, which is first and foremost a department blog, as an opportunity to communicate with the public and educate them about what we are doing at the LAPD," said Police Chief William Bratton. "But I also see it as an opportunity for me to respond to those issues where I feel the department is being misrepresented."

The *Los Angeles Times* immediately saw a downside to the blog – it won't reach poor people in high-crime areas who don't have access to the Internet.



The growing popularity of blogs continues to annoy the big media. According to Greg Sandoval of *CNET News.com*, bloggers are "creaming off newspaper readers." Sandoval cites a "recent study by Forrester Research" that "blogs and newspaper websites now have the same audience share — about 17 percent — among Internet users between the ages of 18 and 24."

This is forcing reluctant newspapers to enter the blogging business themselves, he writes. "Initially caught off guard by blogs, newspapers and old-guard news agencies are now racing to present their own. So

far, the results have been mixed. While papers such as Texas' *Austin American-Statesman* are using blogs to give readers a news voice they never had before, other papers such as the *Washington Post* are struggling with everything from charges of plagiarism in their blogs to being labelled with the word every editor dreads: "boring."

**T**HE ENCROACHING pressure of blogs is unnerving mainstream journalists, as evidenced by such farces as a "Pulitzer prize-winning" reporter and columnist at the *Los Angeles Times*, Michael Hiltzik, resorting to anonymous blogging as a way of smiting his conservative critics and touting his own work. Mortified by Hiltzik's juvenile conduct — he would sneak on to conservative blogging sites under an assumed name to lash out at critics such as radio host Hugh Hewitt — the *Times* cashiered him from his job as a columnist and took away his *latimes.com* blog.

It is not surprising, after all, that reporters, chafing

under the pretence of impartiality, would resort to anonymous blogging as a weapon against gadflies. Hiltzik is not alone; several reporters across the country have been fired or punished in the last year for similar incidents.

The *Times* now has to take fire from all directions: from the Robert Scheer left to the Ann Coulter right, from bloggers to the president of the United States. In May, President Bush used a speech at George Washington University to criticize obliquely an unnamed newspaper for helping the enemy in Iraq.

"Earlier this year, a newspaper published details of a new anti-IED technology [designed to counter roadside bombs] that was being developed. Within five days of the publication — using details from that article — the enemy had posted instructions for defeating this new technology on the Internet. We cannot let the enemy know how we're working to defeat him," he said.

White House aides leaked to the press that Bush was taking a swipe at the *Times*. CPR

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## WHAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TOLD ABOUT GUN CONTROL

By SAM PAREDES

**D**ueling, once acceptable as a way to uphold one's honor, involved mutual agreement as to weapons and rules. An impartial third party insured fairness. The outcome, ahem, was final.

Alas, we live in lapsed times. Ardent anti-gun Assemblyman Paul Koretz, who presumably wants to be thought a man of honor, last June issued a dueling challenge to Assemblyman Jay La Suer over proposed microstamp etching on semi-automatic handgun firing pins:

"... I'm willing," Koretz said, "to put this bill (AB 352) to a challenge if it passes off the floor today ... to challenge Mr. La Suer to take a gun with this technology and a file: if he is able to remove the print on it and then still fire the gun, I will withdraw this bill ...."

*Sam Paredes is executive director of Gun Owners of California. For more information go to [www.gunownersca.com](http://www.gunownersca.com).*

La Suer, of course, accepted the challenge. The weapons were to be firing pins and files. The impartial third parties would be the gunsmiths at the California Highway Patrol Academy. Time and date were agreed upon for the showdown at the CHP Corral.

Oh, but wait! AB 352's sponsors freaked out when they heard of the *affaire d'honneur*. First, they refused to provide a firing pin, so the gallant La Suer told Koretz he would purchase a brand-new handgun for the test. He also forwarded a newly-published report by nationally-renowned firearms forensics special-

ists who held scientific third party tests on the technology's reliability and feasibility, and found it easily defeated and unreliable at best.

Then Koretz wanted the rules of engagement altered: La Suer would receive only household files, a handgun, and 30 minutes to disassemble it, file the firing pin, reassemble the gun, and return it to the CHP for firing. Average criminals, Koretz argued, would lack gunsmith training and sophisticated tools to defeat the technology. Also, La Suer would not be told the type, make, or model of handgun to be used.

Koretz did *not* point out that thus rigging the test was the only way he could win, but La Suer got the message and told Koretz he would give his farce a pass. But Koretz, now hot to go, duelled all alone at the CHP Corral, later announcing that — surprise!! — he won. An affair of honor, liberal-style. CPR

