

**DOES THE PURCHASE OF THE
LOS ANGELES TIMES BY THE
CHICAGO TRIBUNE AUGER A
MONOPOLY OF INFORMATION?**

(The first part of a two-part article)

Scientists in every field warn us that in this "age of information," civilization and the benevolent evolvement of humanity can be jeopardized by the monopolization of the most essential and fundamental information and its transmission. This fear has been widely expressed relative to the \$ 5.8 billion purchase of the Los Angeles Times by the Tribune Co., best known for its ownership of the Chicago Tribune, the cable superstation WGNTV, the Chicago Cubs baseball team and its \$600 million investment in America Online, Inc. Many fear that this purchase will only increase the the power of the Tribune Co. and LA Times' virtual monopoly of the newspaper field in Los Angeles

Articles by staff writers bemoan the sale to the Tribune. They claim that former publisher Otis Chandler transformed the Times, derided as one of the worst newspapers in the country, into "one of the three best" and one of the most admired in the publishing field.

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These accolades make us wonder whether they are referring to the same LA Times that for a century has been and now is a crucible of political corruption, misrule and misinformation in Los Angeles. The Times has never come across a sales tax that it didn't like or a property tax that it did like.

The Times was responsible for putting the entire downtown of Los Angeles into an urban redevelopment agency, which means that the increase in land values in that district remains in the district and is not available for city needs. The Times was also responsible for getting LA's multi billion dollar Wilshire subway and other vital transportation and road projects financed by sales taxes, instead of special assessments.

While some more progressive journalists are attempting to work their way up in the company, there still remains a hard core of writers and editors who follow the ancient adage, "The ancient way suffices them, the age old plan, that they shall take who have the power, and they shall keep who can."

The writer's personal encounters with the Times have been limited, but they are typical. The complete lack of objectivity of Times reporters was encountered by the writer about 25 years ago when he and another advocate of Henry George's ideas, Los Angeles attorney, Malcolm Mackey, filed a winning suit on behalf of a California schoolteacher, Bryan Stevens, to increase the assessment on vacant land owned by then Governor Ronald Reagan in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles. The Times articles on this ten day trial before the County Assessment Appeals Board bore no resemblance to the actual testimony. When the actual verdict came in, rendered by a board of two Republicans and one Democrat, the assessment on the Reagan land was increased by 660%. The Times reporters still sought to label the petitioner and his attorneys as trouble makers who had no right to intervene in this matter.

The Times' frantic opposition to this litigation was caused by fear that the grossly underassessed properties of the Times and of the Chandlers, including those on the 270,000 acre Tejon Ranch, half owned by the Chandlers, might be seriously increased.

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(To be continued in the next issue of *Insights*.)