

The Death of Real News: Foretold by the Movie "Network"

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Sunday, April 10, 2005

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The 1976 masterpiece [Network](#) was prescient enough to foretell the rise of reality TV, the absence of quality news, the public's lack of demand for it and our appetite for fluff that doesn't disturb our comfortable consumer lifestyles. Stories now are not why gas is over a dollar a litre, but where the price wars are to fill up our FUVs. God forbid that we actually delve into the complex geopolitical reasons for oil price increases like ensure the future ability to fuel aircraft carrier groups all within a context of reaching [Hubbert's Peak](#) of oil production.

Now I've just read an [interview](#) with Leroy Sievers, recently resigned Executive Producer of Nightline on why news today is pap. It's fantastic. Here's the best part:

Years ago I was at a conference and people were saying--a couple of people that ran other shows--"We don't want to challenge the audience. We want to make it easy and comfortable," and I was thinking to myself, God, I want to challenge the audience every night. That's what I want to do. Well, it turns out maybe the audience doesn't want to be challenged.

Maybe we're the lone voices crying in the wilderness. I think it's cyclical, but if people don't care about what's going on now, in the world we live in now, what will make them care?

And as we become more consumers than citizens, we demand news that meets our consumer impulse instead of our desire to learn about things we don't already know about:

Where I think it's headed as a business is news on demand. You know, you're going to say, "I'm interested in the weather, I'm interested in film, I'm interested in the beach, I'm interested in Iraq." And so your computer will simply give you those stories. What's being lost now, it's just about gone, and it's going to be lost when all that happens, is the idea that there are stories out there that you don't know about, that you don't know you're interested in, but you will be interested in.

God help us all.

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