

Facing a lack of world news in the Media

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

The announced effort of former Vice President Al Gore and a group of investors to develop a cable TV network offering news to a younger generation has drawn a good deal of attention because of Mr. Gore's political prominence. It is an unusual attempt to develop a news network for a generation that usually don't watch such programming and raises the question of whether it can succeed.

While Mr. Gore and his associates are to be commended for trying to introduce an unconnected generation to world events, the downside to this effort has been largely ignored.

Newsworld International, the channel that Mr. Gore has purchased for a reported \$70 million dollars, is unique in North American broadcasting and its transformation into another manifestation will leave its loyal viewers in the lurch.

NWI is produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and offers 24 hours of almost-unrivaled coverage of global affairs. The network provides an hourly five to ten minute summary of news focused on world events, and fills the other time with excellent mini-documentaries from the CBC as well as newscasts in English from other foreign sources such as Deutsche Welle in Germany, ITV in England, NHK in Japan and nightly newscasts from China.

In addition, on the weekend, NWI provides its own excellent analysis and reporting on such programs as *Foreign Assignment* and *Special Assignment*. The latter focuses for 30 minutes on one country in the news, providing both an historical perspective and an explanation of current developments that help the viewer to better understand issues not often covered by commercial network news or many newspapers.

It is carried by DirecTV and several cable systems around the country including New York and San Francisco.

Only two other cable channels approach the global perspective offered by NWI. One, BBC America, offers world news from the British perspective, but only at scattered times throughout the day. (Many public television stations also carry 30 minutes of BBC news per evening). The other is CNN International, a service of Atlanta-based CNN that is largely unknown to the U.S. audience though it has been reported to have more viewers world-wide than the more commonly known domestic CNN or CNN Headline news.

Those who have lived or traveled overseas know CNNI as a very different channel than its domestic counterpart. Almost every hour features a 30 minute solid newscast giving more emphasis to global events and featuring a variety of anchors from around the world. Specialized programming such as *Inside Africa* and *Diplomatic License* provide information and insights from overseas.

Unfortunately, this quality service is available to U.S. viewers only overnight and on weekends on the CNN-FN channel, filling time not used by the financial department of CNN.

With NWI soon to change, this would be an excellent time for the CNN organization and various providers such as DirecTV, Dish Network and the many cable systems around the country to negotiate the delivery of CNNI programming to North American viewers seven days a week. Such an arrangement would add viewers for CNNI advertisers, would be an additional channel available to cable and satellite viewers, and would offer U.S. viewers a more global perspective on world events.

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