

Guyana Elections Commission
Media Monitoring Unit
Monitoring Report: 1st October 2007– 31st December 2007

Introduction:

The following report documents the Media Monitoring Unit's (MMU) observations and analyses of media behavior emanating from the various media organizations in both the broadcast and print media across the country for the period 1st October- 31st December 2007. Also, this is the fourth and final report produced by the Unit for 2007.

In like manner to our previous reports the Unit depicts in graphs and charts the types and amounts of coverage given to the Parliamentary Political Parties by the local media for the current reporting period. And, as is our custom, we have also highlighted and commented on those instances where the Unit observed and documented breaches of the 2006 Media Code of Conduct – the standard by which we continue to hold the local media accountable.

The broadcast and print media covered in this report are:

Television

GWTV Ch 2
CNS Ch 6
WRHM Ch 7
HBTV Ch 9
NCN Ch 11
VCT Ch 28
MTV Ch 65

Radio

Voice Of Guyana (VOG)

Newspaper

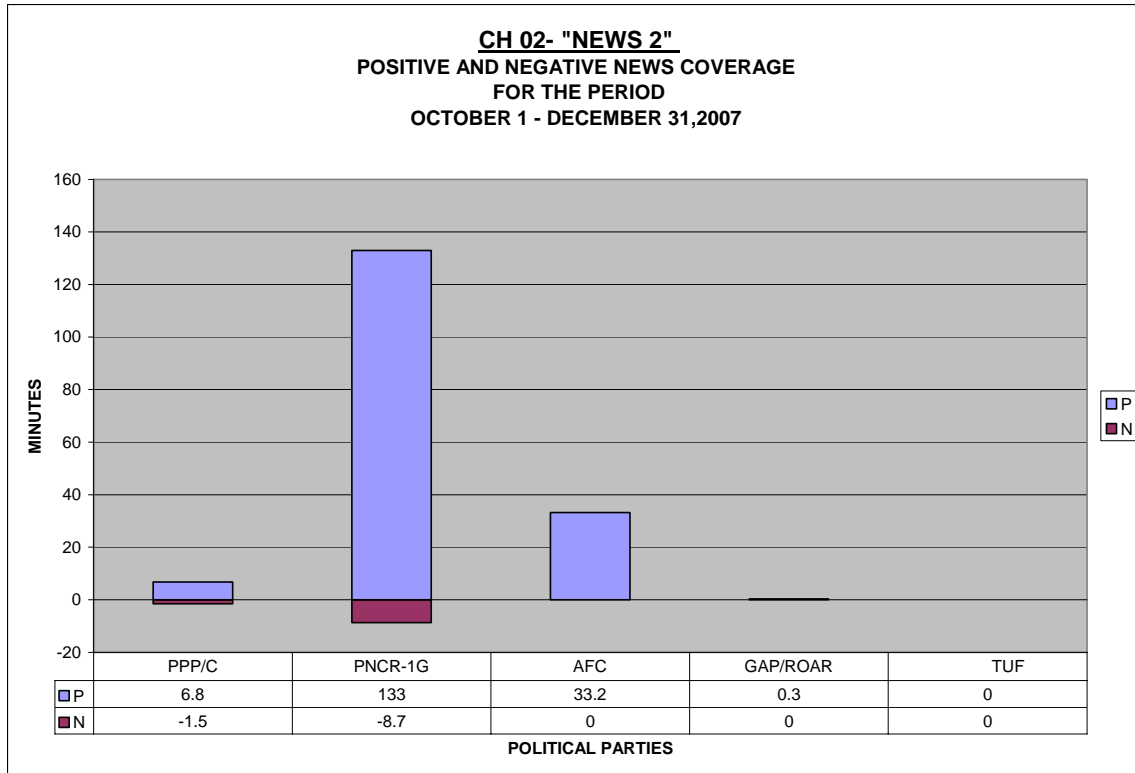
Stabroek News
Kaieteur News
Guyana Chronicle

Further, this report is limited to the coverage received by those political parties with parliamentary representation, namely: PPP/C, PNCR-1G, AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF.

In summary, this final report for the year attempts to show in an objective way how the activities of the five (5) political parties were covered and reported and generally how social, political, governance and other issues were treated by the local media over the past three (3) months.

NB:

The figures given on the bar graphs overleaf depict the amounts of positive and negative coverage given to the aforementioned Parliamentary Political Parties by each TV Station's newscast, the VOG newscast and the newspapers. The charts show the coverage given to the parties in the general programs of each TV station and the radio station. General programs are exclusive of the newscast and include programs that contain political content such as Talk Shows, Current Affairs Programs, Magazine Programs, Commentaries and (Political) Party Programs. Even though the charts highlight the types and amounts of coverage each party received for the current reporting period, all the parties are not shown on every chart because once a political party did not receive a certain amount of coverage it was not included.



CH 2 “News 2” (Graph)

For the current reporting period **News 2** gave the main Parliamentary Opposition Party, PNCR-1G, more than three (3) times the amount of positive coverage recorded for the ruling party (PPP/C) and the two (2) smaller Opposition Parties (GAP/ROAR and TUF) combined. Similarly, the AFC received over four (4) times more positive coverage than PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF combined. And, the PNC/R- 1G received the largest amount of negative coverage in the newscast, followed by the PPP/C with a comparatively smaller amount. GAP/ROAR was not negatively covered and TUF did not receive any positive or negative coverage over the past three (3) months.

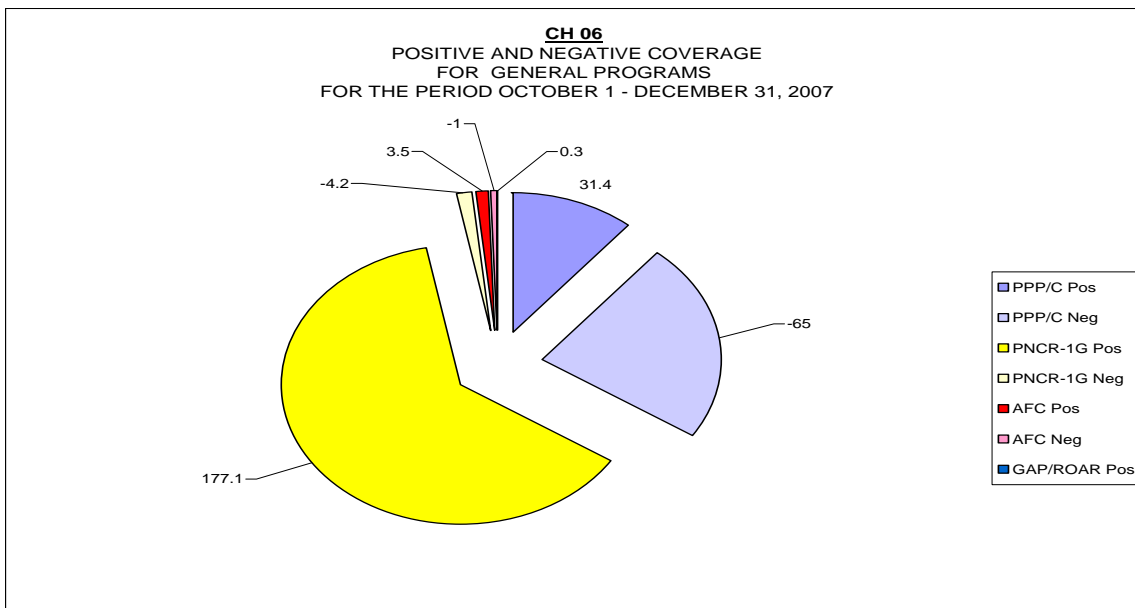
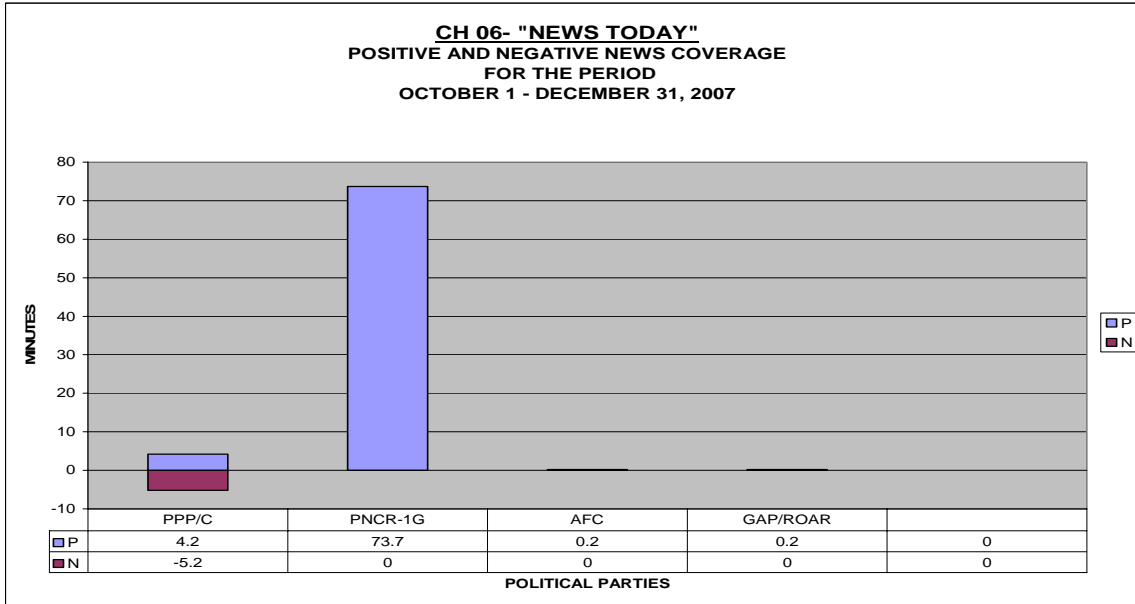
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The Unit did not record any measurable positive or negative coverage for any of the political parties in the Station’s programs and as such no chart was generated for the station for the current reporting period.

Analysis

The figures from the **News 2** graph showed that the PNC/R–1G dominated the spread of news coverage on the newscast. The total amount of positive coverage the party received was stark vis-à-vis the other parties; likewise, the comparison in negative coverage. The disparity in positive and negative coverage given to the Political Parties by the newsteam

can be traced to the larger quantum of PNC/R-1G activities that the newscast covers and the correspondingly greater amount and frequency of time given to PNC/R-1G officials to air their views on issues of public concern, as against officials from the other political parties. This observed behavior on the part of **News 2** reporters has to be seriously addressed if the program is to be perceived as unbiased and politically neutral by the viewing public. A wider array of views (political, social etc) should be canvassed and publicized on topical issues if this newscast is to pass the litmus tests for balance, equity and professionalism.



CH 6 “News Today” (Graph)

For the current reporting period **News Today** covered the five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties in the following way: the PNC/R-1G received sixteen (16) times more positive coverage than the other four (4) political parties combined (i.e. PPP/C, AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF). On the other hand, the PPP/C was given a little over ten (10) times the amount of positive coverage received by the AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF combined.

Interestingly, only the PPP/C received any negative coverage from the newscast; and this cancelled out its positive coverage, leaving the party with a net negative coverage. TUF was the only political party that did not receive neither positive nor negative coverage.

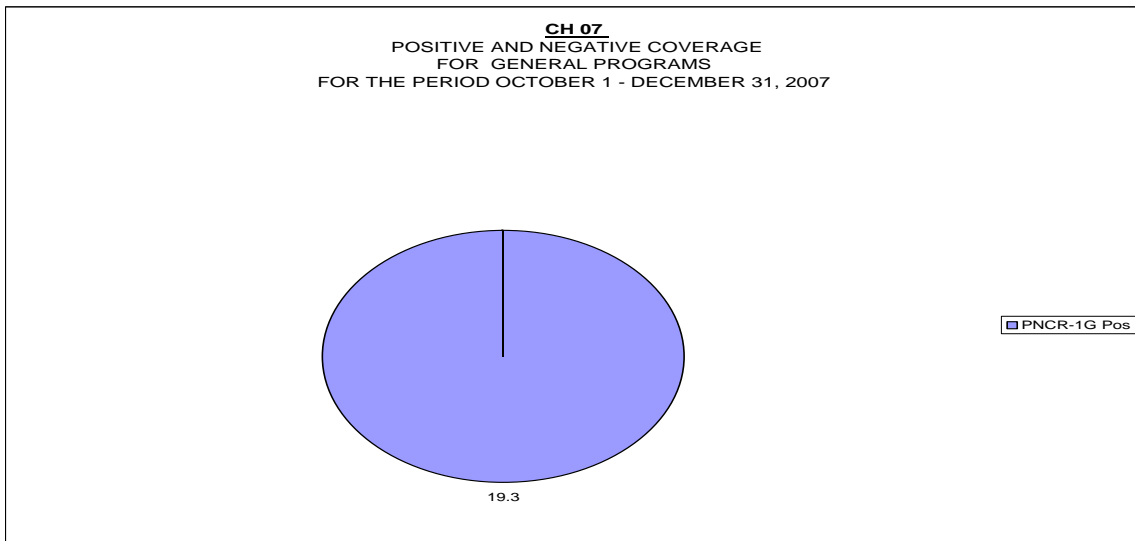
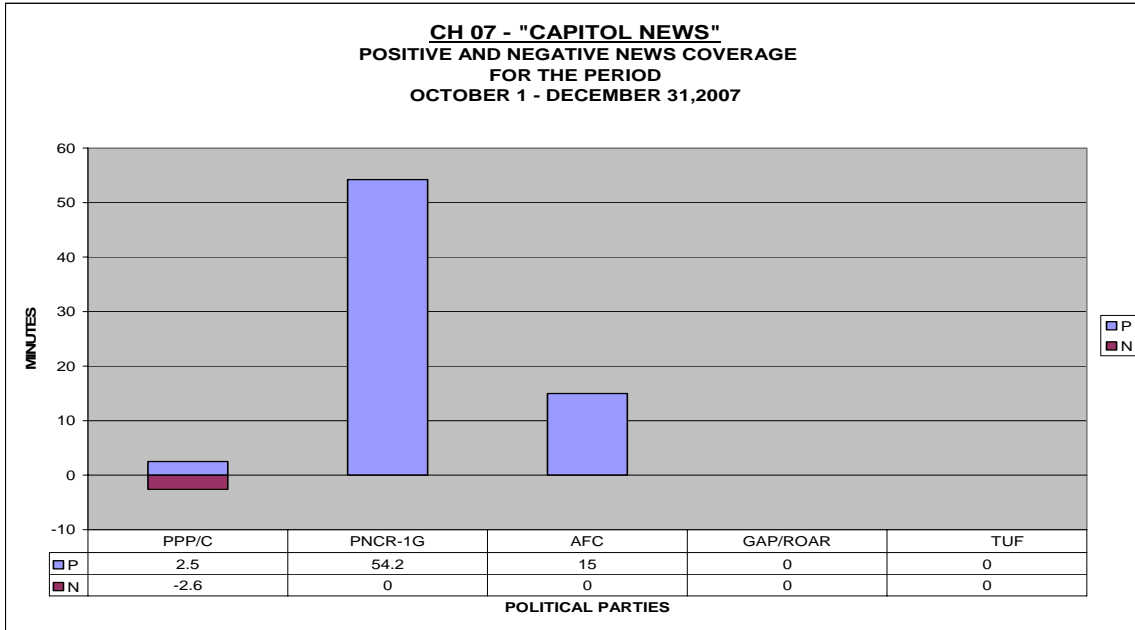
General Programs (Chart)

In the Station's general programming the PNC/R-1G gained the largest amount of positive coverage, which was more than five(5) times the combined amounts obtained by the other parties. Comparatively, the AFC and GAP/ROAR received negligible amounts of positive coverage and in like manner to the newscast, the PPP/C also ended up with net negative coverage in the Station's general programs. The Party's negative coverage was fifteen (15) times greater than the negative coverage of the other four (4) parties combined. Contrastingly, the PNC/R-1G and AFC registered relatively small amounts of negative coverage whilst GAP/ROAR and TUF did not record any.

Analysis

The figures from the graph and the chart were very revealing. They indicated that in both the newscast and general programs of Channel 6, there was a pattern of positive information coming out from the station about the main opposition political party (PNC/R-1G). In this regard, the newscast figures are most striking since the overwhelming amounts of positive coverage given to the PNC/R-1G stands out noticeably from the amounts recorded for the other political parties; these parties were virtually relegated to the periphery. This statistic suggests that the newsteam of **News Today** are not doing a good job at being impartial in their delivery of news and information to the public, since the figures infer a lack of equity and balance in the newscast's coverage of the parties.

Moreover, the chart's figures give the perception that the station's programs (with political content) are mostly biased in favor of the opposition parties and unfavorable to the PPP/C. However, the Unit's documented observations revealed that it is just one (1) program- **Voice Of The People** – which influenced the wide disparities in positive and negative coverage recorded for the political parties, especially the comparatively huge amount of negative coverage enumerated for the PPP/C. This program which is shown daily is supposed to be a forum for highlighting social problems in the society, but the host uses it as a platform for anti-government and anti-PPP/C rhetoric; hence the large difference in negative coverage recorded for the PPP/C in relation to the other political parties.



CH 7 “Capitol News” (Graph)

For the current reporting period **Capitol News** gave the PNC/R-1G three (3) times more positive coverage than all the other political parties combined. The AFC received a fairly reasonable amount of positive coverage over the period, while the PPP/C got a very small amount. GAP/ROAR and TUF did not receive any measurable positive coverage and all the parties, with the exception of the PPP/C did not receive any negative coverage. The amount of negative coverage given to the PPP/C cancelled out or neutralized the positive coverage it received, leaving the party with net negative coverage from the newscast.

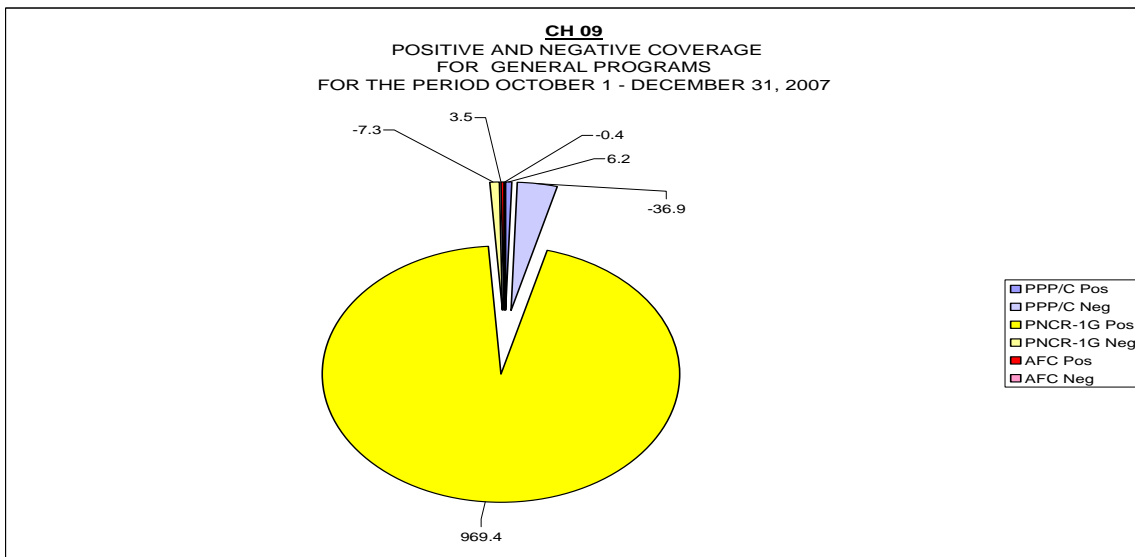
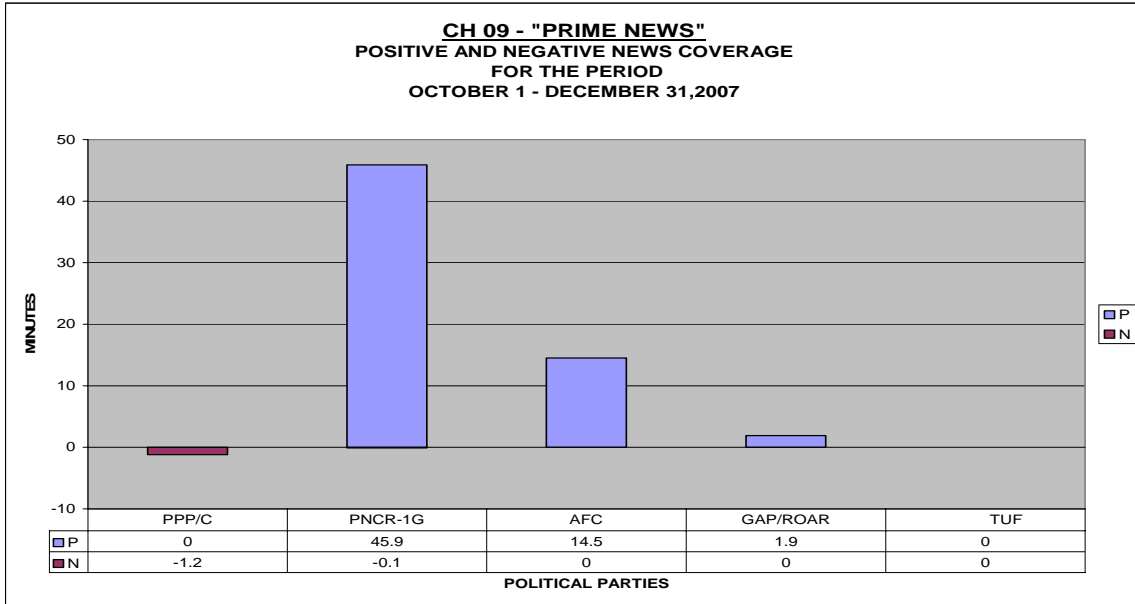
General Program (Chart)

Only the PNC/R-1G recorded any meaningful coverage in the station's general programs.

Analysis

In terms of equity and balance, **Capitol News** coverage of the political parties' left a lot to be desired, during the current reporting period. The Unit's records showed that the PNC/R-1G's commanding positive coverage was due mainly to the fact that that party received more air-time - albeit positive air-time- on the newscast than all the other political parties. Of the smaller political parties (GAP/ROAR and TUF) only GAP/ROAR made the news, though neutrally rather than positively or negatively.

The disparity in positive coverage between PNC/R-1G and the other political parties could be due to either the newsteam not putting enough effort into actively seeking to give these parties coverage on issues, or PNC/R-1G officials are more accessible. Whatever the reason, the fact is, for this last quarter the newscast failed abysmally in given equitable coverage to all the Parliamentary Political Parties.



Ch 9 “Prime News” (Graph)

For this reporting period **Prime News** gave the PNC/R-1G just over twice the amount of positive coverage it gave to the other Parliamentary Political Parties combined. The AFC trailed in second position followed by GAP/ROAR. Most notably, the PPP/C joined TUF as the only two (2) parties which did not received any measurable positive coverage. Only the PNC/R-1G and the PPP/C accrued negative coverage, with the PPP/C receiving twelve(12) times the amount given to the PNC/R-1G.

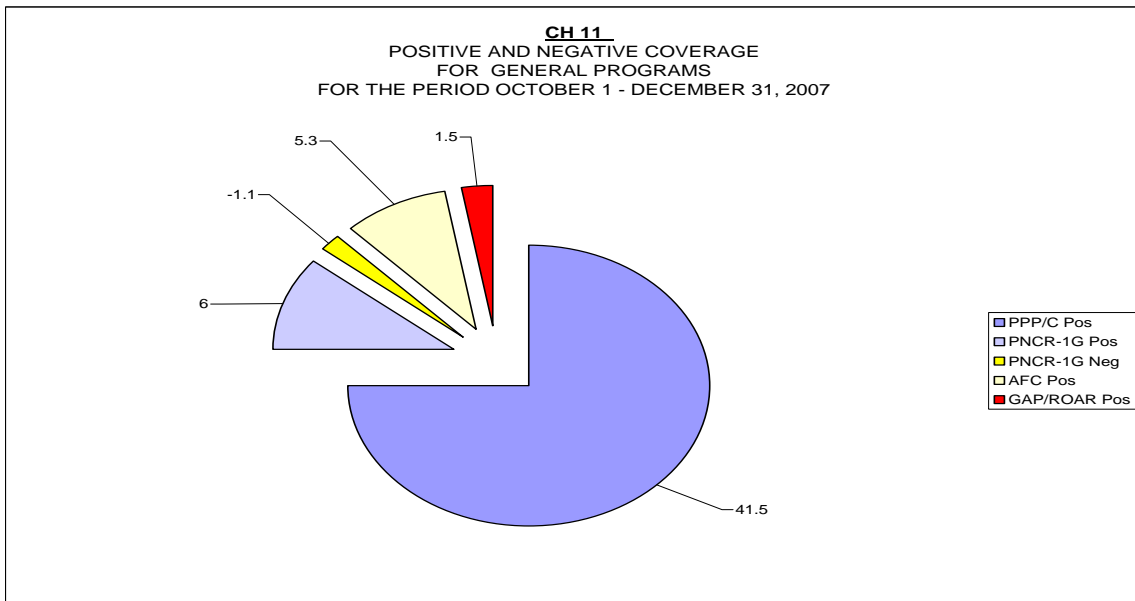
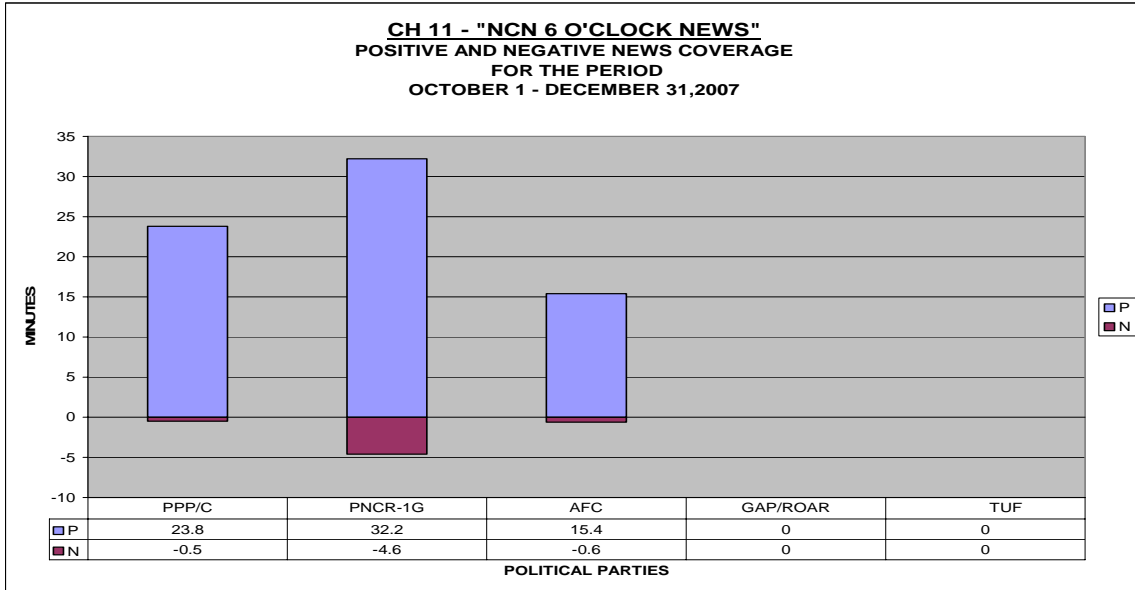
General Program (Chart)

The figures taken from the station's general programs showed an exceedingly large amount of positive coverage obtained by the PNC/R-1G and a disproportionately huge amount of negative coverage given to the PPP/C. The PNC/R-1G received approximately one hundred (100) times more positive coverage than the other political parties combined while the PPP/C received just over four (4) times more negative coverage than all the other parties combined. Also, the PPP/C's large negative coverage virtually cancelled out the small positive coverage the party was given. Neither GAP/ROAR nor TUF received either positive or negative coverage in the station's general programs.

Analysis

The noticeable disproportion in positive coverage given by **Prime News** to the PNC/R-1G as against the other political parties is attributable to the confluence of two phenomena. Based on the Unit's observations there was a surfeit of PNC/R-1G related activities making the news on this newscast during the current reporting period; and PNC/R-1G officials were given far greater air-time on this newscast than officials from the other parties. Also, when cognizance is taken of the fact that the Unit recorded only negative coverage from the newscast for the PPP/C (which is the largest Parliamentary Political Party) it raises legitimate concerns about the agenda of this newscast in its delivery of news and information to the public. The graph's figures suggest that by any standard this newscast cannot be rated as balanced and equitable. This is an area that the newsteam needs to pay serious attention to by giving the political parties other than the PNC/R-1G more coverage on social, political and other issues.

The Chart's figures adduced from the station's general programming showed that the PNC/R-1G had by far the largest amount of positive coverage while the PPP/C received the highest negative coverage. These two (2) statistics have a direct relationship and were influenced (but not exclusively) by the contents of the twice weekly PNC/R-1G party program, **Nation Watch**.



Ch 11 “NCN 6 O’clock News” (Graph)

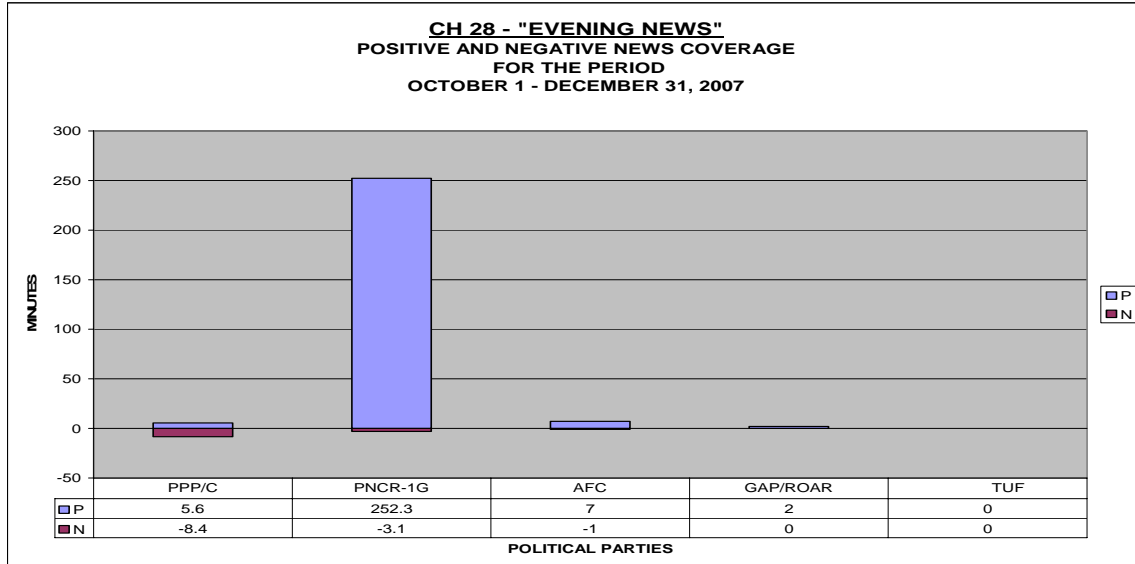
The **6 O’ Clock** gave the PNC/R-1G slightly more positive coverage than the PPP/C and the AFC respectively for the current reporting period. Both the PPP/C and the AFC received significant amounts of positive coverage from the newscast with the PPP/C gaining the larger amount; and the PNC/R-1G, PPP/C and AFC were the only three (3) parties negatively covered with the PNC/R-1G obtaining the highest amount of negative coverage. GAP/ROAR and TUF did not accrue either positive or negative coverage from the newscast.

General Program (Chart)

In the station's general programs the PPP/C was given three (3) times more positive coverage than the other parties combined. The amounts of positive coverage given to the opposition parties, namely, PNC/R-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR were noticeably very small in comparison to the coverage given to the PPP/C. Except for the PNC/R-1G which received an extremely small amount of negative coverage, none of the other parties were negatively covered

Analysis

The **6 O'clock News** gave a fairly decent spread of positive and negative coverage to the PPP/C, PNC/R-1G and AFC. However, the commendable coverage of these three (3) parties is negated somewhat by the failure of the newscast to give similar equitable coverage to the smaller parties, namely, GAP/ROAR and TUF. Apart from this aberration, the newscast did make a genuine attempt at presenting news and information to the public that was premised on fairness, equity and balance. In contrast to the newscast, the coverage the political parties received in the station's general programs could have been more equitable. The overwhelming positive coverage the PPP/C received through this medium was traced to the number of government programs aired on this channel which are unabashedly favorable to the government and the PPP/C.



Ch 28 “Evening News” (Graph)

Evening News gave the PNC/R-1G the largest share of positive coverage amongst all the political parties for the current reporting period. The PNC/R-1G received over seventeen (17) times more positive coverage than the other political parties combined. The AFC trailed in second position followed by the PPP/C and then GAP/ROAR. The PPP/C obtained the highest amount of negative coverage which was more than the positive coverage it received, thus the party had a net negative coverage from the newscast. The PNC/R-1G and AFC were also negatively covered but not so severely as to greatly affect their positive coverage. GAP/ROAR did not receive any negative coverage, while TUF got neither positive nor negative coverage.

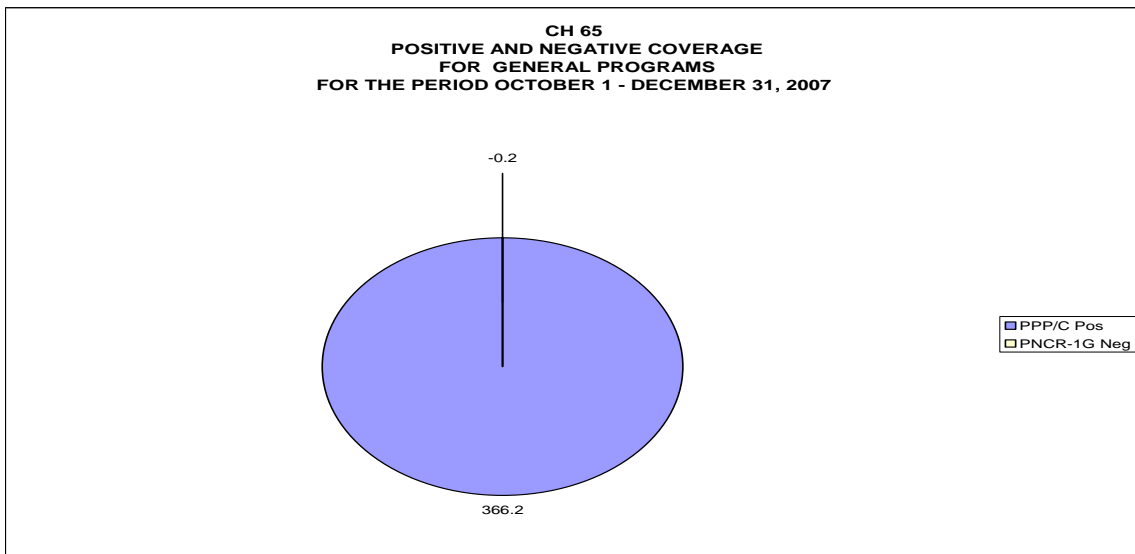
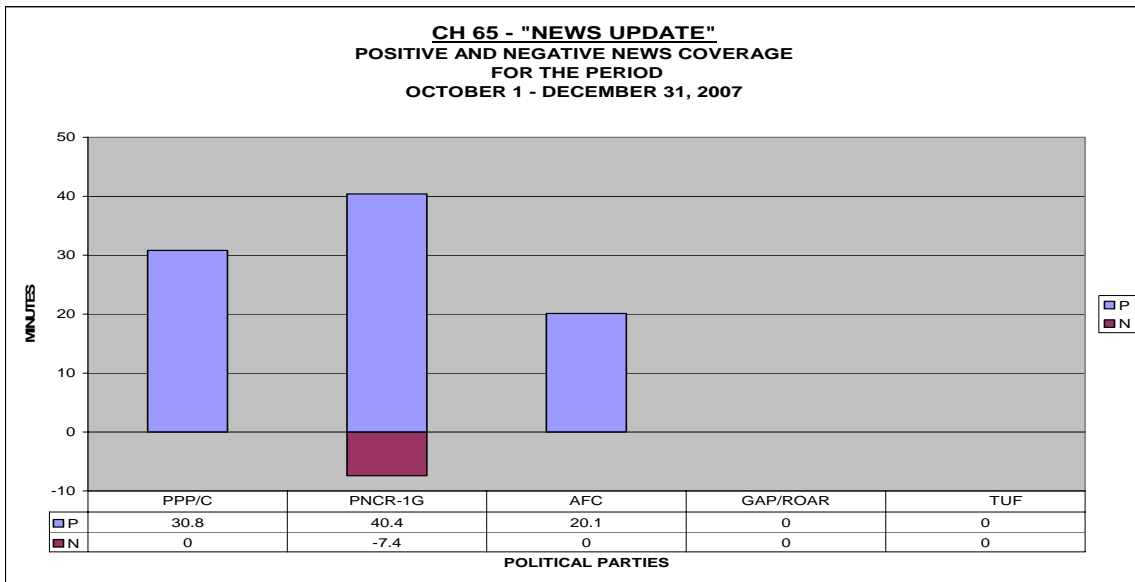
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The MMU did not extract any meaningful timing from the general programs of the station which was significant enough to record either positive or negative ratings to any of the political parties. In the circumstance, no chart was generated for the current reporting period.

Analysis

It can be said that **Evening News** gave all the political parties (with the exception of TUF) coverage of some kind. However, the comparatively huge differential between the positive coverage given to the PNC/R-1G and the other parties is quite noticeable on the graph. Based on the MMU’s documented observations, the concentration of positive coverage on the PNC/R-1G’s column in the graph is directly related to the “efficiency” of the **Evening News** newsteam in giving almost daily publicity to the PNC/R-1G’s activities and the Party’s views on social and political issues that are current. The foregoing evidence suggests that the newscast has a political agenda. However, this situation could be rectified if the newsteam took the bold step of giving more widespread

coverage to the other Political Parties, thereby ensuring fairness, equity and balance in its offerings to the general public.



Ch 65 “News Update” (Graph)

For the current reporting period, **News Update** only gave coverage to three (3) of the Parliamentary Political Parties: PPP/C, PNC/R-1G and AFC. GAP/ROAR and TUF did not receive any type of coverage from this newscast. The PNC/R-1G received the largest amount of positive coverage, followed by the PPP/C, then the AFC. There were small differences in the amounts of positive coverage received by the three (3) Parties and the PNC/R-1G was the only Party that received measurable negative coverage.

General Program (Chart)

In the station's general programming, the PPP/C was the only political party that received positive coverage and the PNC/R-1G the only party that received negative coverage. What is striking about the chart though, is that the PPP/C's positive coverage is huge and the PNC/R-1G's negative coverage is minute; hence a stark contrast is observed.

Analysis

The newscast may be justifiably criticized for not giving coverage to the smaller parties, GAP/ROAR and TUF. However, this is not necessary so, because even though the graph inferred this behavior, the fact is that both Parties were given small amounts of coverage by the newscast during this reporting period but more in a neutral way than in terms of what is usually considered positive or negative. With this in mind, it means therefore that **News Update** managed to achieve a creditable input of equity and balance in its coverage of the Political Parties for this reporting period.

In contrast to the newscast, the station's other programs showed only one party (PPP/C) garnering all the positive coverage exclusively, which goes against the principle of balance. The imbalance in positive coverage between the PPP/C and the other Parties was influenced solely by the program "**Getting it Right**" which is a paid PPP/C program that is given extensive air time on this channel.

General Analysis/Observations – Television

Some of the more notable observances made by the Unit during the current reporting period were: Two (2) Political Parties did not fare well in terms of the overall coverage given by individual newscasts. For example the PPP/C obtained net negative coverage from four (4) newscasts, namely, **News Today, Capital News, Prime News and Evening News**. And, TUF was not given either positive or negative coverage by any of the newscasts. As a matter of fact, the Party was only mentioned briefly and neutrally en passant in the contents of most of the newscasts. The Unit's evaluation of the pattern whereby the PPP/C received net negative coverage from four (4) of the seven (7) newscasts is that it is more a 'fallout' from the action of newsteams giving more publicity to the main Opposition PNC/R-1G, rather than a deliberate policy by these newscasts to portray the PPP/C in a negative light. Nevertheless, this does not negate the fact that being the largest Parliamentary Party it should be getting far more coverage than what it is currently receiving from some of the local newscasts.

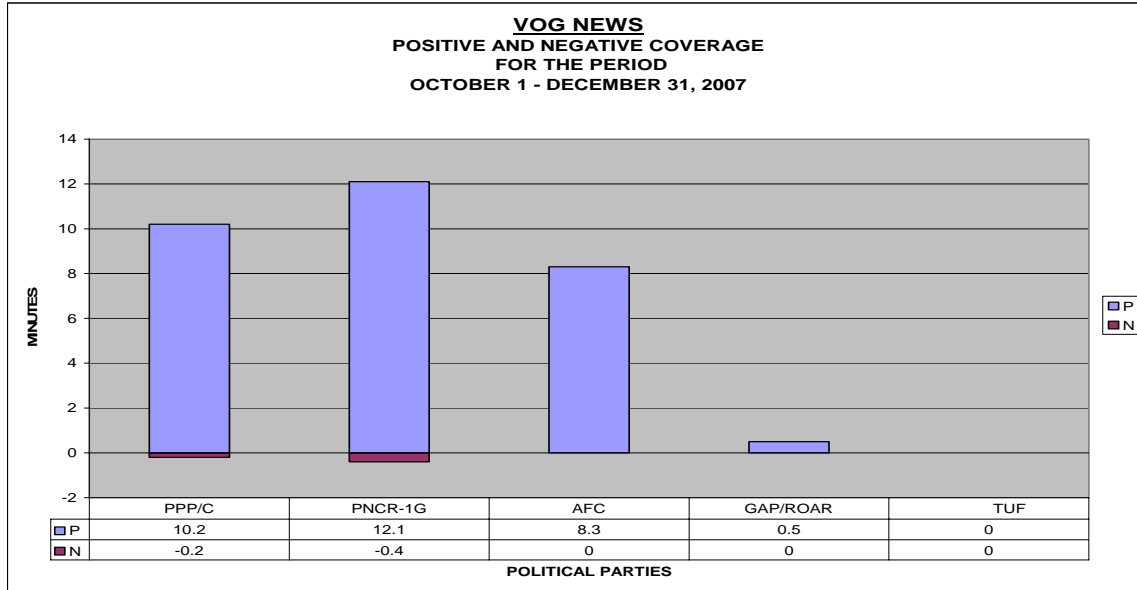
The Unit's analysis of TUF's predicament of not receiving any measurable coverage from all of the newscasts is that it is self inflicted. This is because the Party is mute on issues of national importance and its public activities are limited to the confines of parliament where they are oftentimes subsumed under government activities. This means that there is not much for reporters to go after since outside of parliament the Party's silence is profound.

The general programming on at least three (3) channels: Ch. 6, Ch. 9 and Ch 65 that are dominated by Political Party programs, produced figures wholly one sided and biased to either the PPP/C or the PNC/R-1G. The owners/editors of these stations need to add balance to their programming by implementing concrete actions to address this situation.

**TOTAL POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS) EACH PARTY RECEIVED
FROM TELEVISION STATIONS FOR THE PERIOD
1st October – 31st December, 2007**

CHANNEL	PARTY	POSITIVE COVERAGE		TOTAL POSITIVE MINS	NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS)		TOTAL NEGATIVE MINS
		NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS		NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS	
		OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	
2	PPP/C	6.8	0	6.8	-1.5	0	-1.5
	PNCR-1G	133	0	133	-8.7	0	-8.7
	AFC	33.2	0	33.2	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	0.3	0	0.3	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	PPP/C	4.2	31.4	35.6	-5.2	-65	-70.2
	PNCR-1G	73.7	177.1	250.8	0	-4.2	-4.2
	AFC	0.2	3.5	3.7	0	-1	-1
	GAP/ROAR	0.2	0.3	0.5	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	PPP/C	2.5	0	2.5	-2.6	0	-2.6
	PNCR-1G	54.2	19.3	73.5	0	0	0
	AFC	15	0	15	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	PPP/C	0	6.2	6.2	-1.2	-36.9	-38.1
	PNCR-1G	45.9	969.4	1015.3	-0.1	-7.3	-7.4
	AFC	14.5	3.5	18	0	-0.4	-0.4
	GAP/ROAR	1.9	0	1.9	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0

CHANNEL	PARTY	POSITIVE COVERAGE		TOTAL POSITIVE MINS	NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS)		TOTAL NEGATIVE MINS
		NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS		NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS	
		OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	OCT 1 - DEC 31	
11	PPP/C	23.8	41.5	65.3	-0.5	0	-0.5
	PNCR-1G	32.2	6	38.2	-4.6	-1.1	-5.7
	AFC	15.4	5.3	20.7	-0.6	0	-0.6
	GAP/ROAR	0	1.5	1.5	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	PPP/C	5.6	0	5.6	-8.4	0	-8.4
	PNCR-1G	252.3	0	252.3	-3.1	0	-3.1
	AFC	7	0	7	-1	0	-1
	GAP/ROAR	2	0	2	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0
65	PPP/C	30.8	366.2	397	0	0	0
	PNCR-1G	40.4	0	40.4	-7.4	-0.2	-7.6
	AFC	20.1	0	20.1	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0

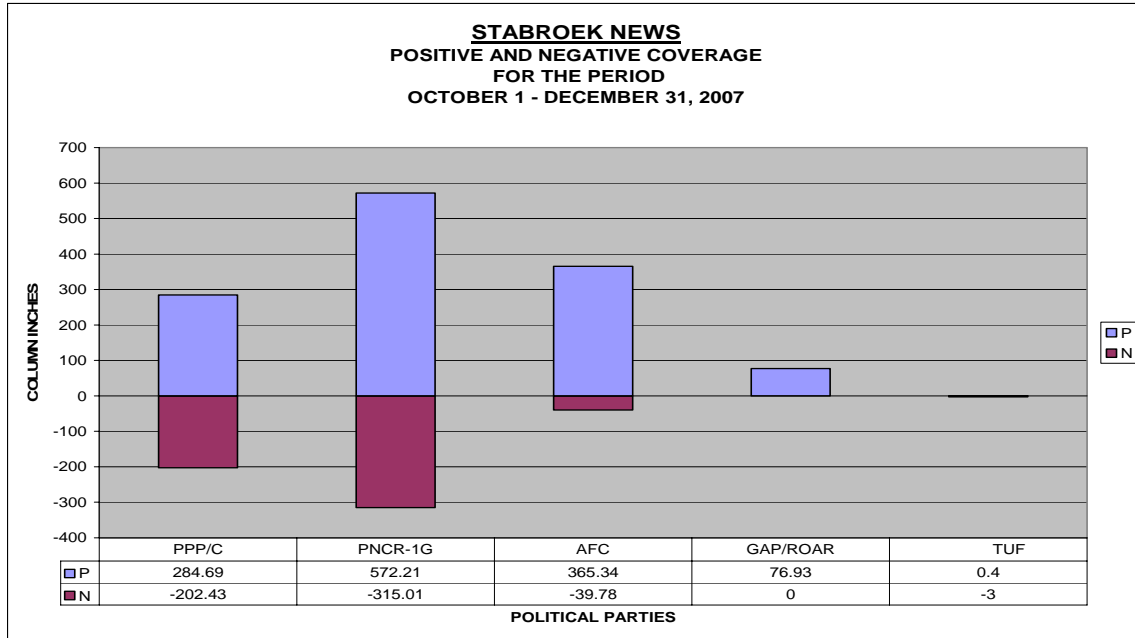


Voice Of Guyana News (Graph)

For the current reporting period **VOG News** gave the **PNC/R-1G** the highest amount of positive coverage, closely followed by the **PPP/C**, then the **AFC**, and lastly **GAP/ROAR**, in that order. There weren't any wide margins separating the **PNC/R-1G**, **PPP/C** and **AFC**; however, **GAP/ROAR** trailed by a good distance in the amount of positive coverage the Party received from the newscast. Only the **PPP/C** and the **PNC/R-1G** were negatively covered, while **TUF** did not obtain neither positive nor negative coverage.

Analysis

Apart from **TUF** not receiving any measurable coverage that was either positive or negative, the newscast gave a fairly equitable distribution of coverage to the Political Parties which was complemented by a laudable attempt at balance in terms of the ratio of positive to negative coverage recorded for each party. This was a very good performance by **VOG News** and caps a year where the newscast consistently exhibited an acceptable degree of equity and balance in its output.



Stabroek News (Graph)

All the Political Parties received positive and negative coverage in varying amounts from the **Stabroek News (SN)** during the current reporting period, though, the PNC/R-1G received the highest amounts of positive and negative coverage. The AFC received the second largest amount of positive coverage followed by the PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF in that order. The PPP/C recorded the second largest amount of negative coverage and GAP/ROAR was the only Political Party that was not negatively covered.

Analysis

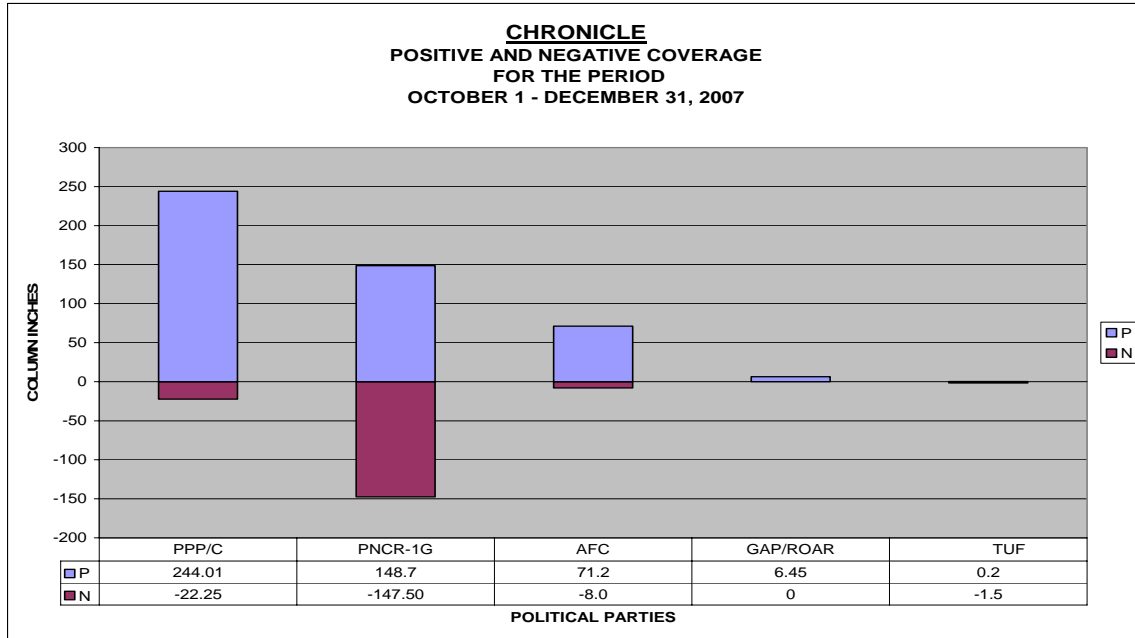
A more in-depth look at the figures on the graph brings to the surface more than what meets the eye at a cursory glance. For example even though the PNC/R-1G received the largest amount of positive coverage, in terms of net positive coverage, the AFC actually leads the way followed by the PNC/R-1G, PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF in that order. Also, the figures infer that SN was able to achieve a fair and acceptable amount of balance and equity in its coverage of the Political Parties, taking into consideration the fact that in the overall analysis of the figures recorded for each party neither of the two (2) major parties dominated the output of the newspaper.

Comment

In its Sunday, November 18, 2007 edition, the SN printed a letter to the editor written by Tacuma Ogunseye, titled '**I am trying to promote a serious discussion on the form the struggle should take**' (pg. 8), which the Unit feels was an undisguised advocacy for violent confrontation within the society. An excerpt taken from the letter reads as follows:

“I would like to make it very clear that I do not agree that armed struggle is a non-option. This form of struggle is always an option that is available to the oppressed once they are willing to make the necessary sacrifices....**my position is that the African community has to consider the option of supporting an armed resistance and giving it legitimacy...**”

The Unit is of the view that the above statements are an incitement to racial violence and a threat to national security and should have been edited out of the letter in the interest of promoting a peaceful and cohesive society.



Guyana Chronicle(Graph)

For the current reporting period the **Guyana Chronicle** (GC) gave the PPP/C the largest amount of positive coverage followed by the PNC/R-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR in that order. All the parties received negative coverage, except GAP/ROAR. The PNC/R-1G received the largest amount of negative coverage which was over four (4) times the combined totals of the other parties and its net positive coverage was less than the AFC and GAP/ROAR. Thus, the AFC had the second largest net positive coverage of all the Parties followed by GAP/ROAR, then the PNC/R-1G, and TUF in last position.

Analysis

All the Political Parties were given coverage of some kind by the GC which is commendable. However the PNC/R-1G's statistics make for interesting reading. The negative coverage the Party was given almost cancelled out the positive coverage it received. A closer examination of this fact by the Unit revealed that most of the negative coverage recorded for the Party came from the letter pages of the newspaper and to a lesser extent from certain columnists writing in the paper's Sunday edition.

The letter pages of the GC seem to have become the medium of choice for anti-opposition (or more specifically anti-PNC/R-1G) elements to communicate their opinions and rhetoric and this is reflected in the large amount of negative coverage recorded for the Party on the GC graph. The PNC/R-1G statistic spoils what would have been a good performance for the GC during this last quarter and the MMU would like to suggest to Management to open the letter pages of the Chronicle to a wider range of views that would ultimately bring balance to this section of the newspaper.

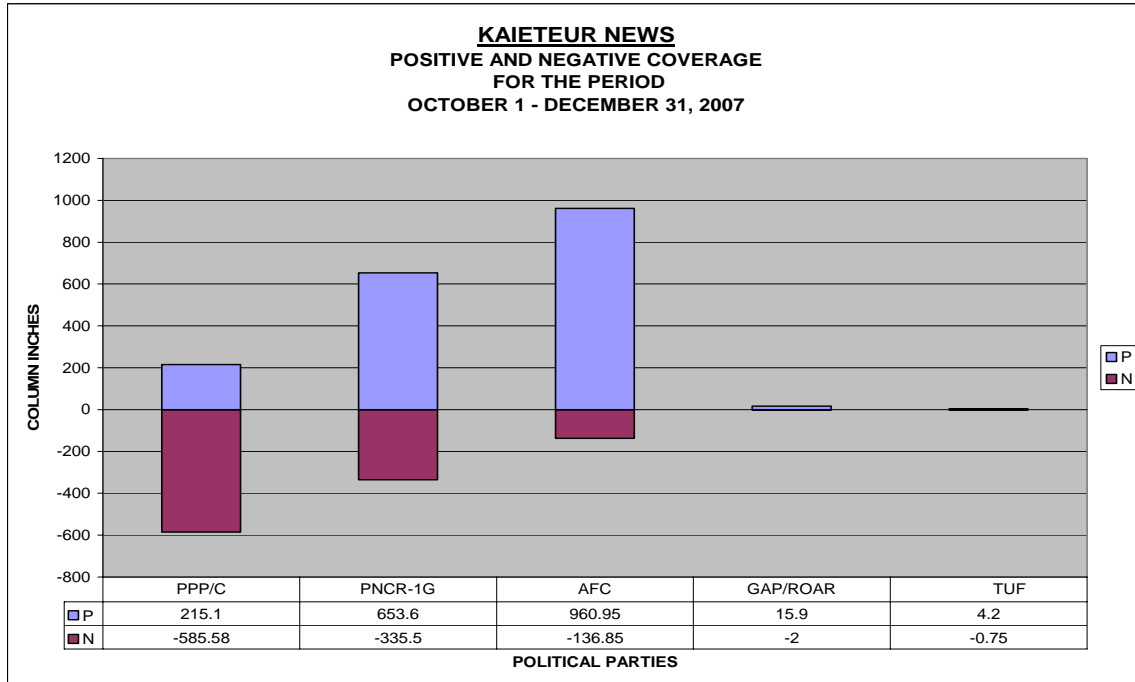
Comment

The MMU chides the Editor of the Chronicle for making public the contents of a letter that stands out as arguably the worst example of racial bigotry published in the local media for 2007.

In the GC of Monday 8 October 2007, Shameer Ali wrote a letter to the Editor, captioned **“Finally the courage to tell the truth”** (pg. 6) in which he (Shameer Ali) made the following remarks:

“Finally a black person had the courage to tell the truth about crimes in Guyana. Mr. Frederick A. Smith, who is a black person, admitted in Saturday’s Guyana Chronicle that blacks [commit] 99% of crimes in Guyana...Just take a look at the prisons and see the ratio of ethnic inmates. Also take a look at the persons who are being arrested daily for crimes and you will clearly see that they are mostly blacks. Blacks have the same opportunities in this country to make it but choose not to educate themselves and work hard...”

The Unit checked the letter written by Frederick A. Smith that the writer referred to and did not find the above statement or statistic mentioned in its entirety. As such, we are of the opinion that this was a deliberate attempt at misrepresentation in order to find support for a racist agenda. The Unit has noted that the Chronicle’s editorial staff did not check the veracity of the claims made in this letter before publishing it. We take the very strong and unequivocal view that the entire letter is inflammatory, racially repugnant and intended to maliciously stigmatize African people and publicly portray them in a negative light. The Unit’s position is that the contents of the letter are at variance with the national ideal of fostering harmonious ethnic relationships and should not have been printed.



Kaieteur News (Graph)

For the period under review **Kaieteur News** (KN) gave the AFC the largest amount of positive coverage amongst the Political Parties; the AFC was given more than four (4) times the amount of positive coverage received by the PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF combined. The AFC, PNC/R-1G and PPP/C all received significant amounts of positive coverage, while TUF and GAP/ROAR received incomparably finite amounts of same from KN. The PPP/C recorded the largest amount of negative coverage which was more than the combined total of negative coverage obtained by the other Political Parties and substantially more than the positive coverage it was given. The PNC/R-1G and AFC were also negatively covered but to lesser degrees. Neither GAP/ROAR nor TUF recorded any negative coverage for this current reporting period.

Analysis

There are two (2) statistics that are most significant about **Kaieteur News** apportioning of coverage to the Political Parties, and these are: the AFC was more positively covered than the other Parties; and the PPP/C is the only party that obtained net negative coverage.

The AFC’s accumulated lead in positive coverage over the other Political Parties is the result of the KN policy of allotting the Party a whole page (and more, sometimes) in its weekly Sunday edition to highlight its achievements, its position on issues and to publicize profiles of its members. In the MMU’s observations, ratings and analyses for this final quarter of the year the Party benefited tremendously from the positive publicity gained through the aforementioned weekly space.

Contrastingly, the Unit found that there was a correlation between the PPP/C's net negative coverage and the amount of space given by the newspaper to certain columnists who have a decidedly anti-government and anti-PPP/C agenda. However this situation can be ameliorated if Management of KN invite officials of the PPP/C to do a daily or weekly feature on behalf of the Party; this measure would go a long way towards giving some amount of balance to the newspaper's output.

Comment

In the Thursday 29 November, 2007 edition of KN there was a letter to the Editor, written by Evan Thomas captioned "**Are Africans making any efforts to improve their lot, other than crying?**" (pg. 5) which contained statements (at para. 4) that were laced with racial innuendos and in breach of the Code of Conduct. Mr. Thomas stated the following:

"The interest of myself and my group at the expense of others who don't want to join us is what the PPP is promoting. It's the Indian time now after the 28 years of African opportunities"

The Unit noted that nowhere in the letter did the writer provide examples or compelling evidence to substantiate the above allegation. On the contrary, the statement is unsubstantiated, racially divisive and wickedly intended to show that the ruling Party is actively pursuing a racial agenda.

In the interest of promoting racial cohesion among all the races in the country and more so because of the lack of evidence, the Unit is of the view that the above statement should have been edited out from the said letter.

General Analysis/Observations - Newspapers

For this last quarter all three (3) newspapers achieved the laudable feat of giving measurable coverage to all five (5) of the Parliamentary Political Parties. However, the KN and GC showed contrasting patterns of coverage. Whereas the PPP/C obtained net negative coverage in the KN, the PNC/R-1G's positive coverage from the GC was almost cancelled out by the negative coverage it received. The reasons for these two (2) phenomena have already been explained and the Unit has proffered workable suggestions for redressing these imbalances. The SN managed to achieve the best level of balance and equity in the coverage of the Political Parties by the three (3) newspapers, and this accomplishment is directly related to the robustness of its letter pages; and the fact that the newspaper's columnists are largely of an international genre.

Conclusion


The MMU has noted in its analysis of media behavior for this final quarter of the year, that there were no recorded breaches of the Media Code from the broadcast media. This is a creditable improvement over the preceding quarterly periods of 2007. Nevertheless, measures to counter the perennial problem of lack of fairness, equity and balance in newscasts and general programming continue to elude the management of many TV stations and this adversely impacted on the quality of programming delivered to the general public.

The performance of the print media was below par and left a lot to be desired in terms of professional media standards. The Unit observed that there was a lack of strong editorial control over what was allowed to be printed in the letter pages of the three (3) daily newspapers since the documented breaches of the Code of Conduct for this last quarter were observed only in the print media; and all were race- related.

Of lately, the sensitive issue of race relations (especially between the two major races) has been the main topic engaging robust and frank debates in the letter pages of the three (3) dailies. However, in the cut and thrust of these vibrant social exchanges, extremist elements have been allowed to communicate their skewed racist ideas to the public, which can lead to deleterious consequences. Editors, by virtue of their positions, are the virtual ‘Gatekeepers’ and ‘Watchdogs’ of the society and it devolves upon them not to allow their media to be used as conduits for the fomenting of racial violence and the communication of race-hate in the society. Also, they [Editors] should be able to make a clear distinction between literature that should be published as legitimate freedom of expression and that which is inflammatory, racially divisive, an incitement to violence and a threat to national security.

The Unit also observed that a trend that is pervasive within the broadcast media seeped into the print media during this last quarter of the year, and that is, the insertion of opinion into ‘hard’ news stories by reporters. And, this is just another example which typifies the fall in standards in the print media for this quarter.

Overall, there has been a marked improvement in media behavior in the broadcast sector as evidenced by the absence of any recorded breaches over the past three (3) months. However, this has not been the case in the print media which ended up at the lower end of the performance scorecard.



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Media Monitoring Unit (GECOM)