

Guyana Elections Commission
Media Monitoring Unit (MMU)
Monitoring Report: 1st April 2008– 30th June 2008

Introduction:

This report is the second for this year, and represents the MMU's observations, analyses, conclusions and recommendations in relation to local media performance for the period 01-04-08 to 30-06-08. It is also a forthright attempt to compare and evaluate media behavior vis-à-vis similarities and/or differences between the preceding period (01-01-08 to 31-03-08) and this reporting period.

In this report, the Unit as is customary, has highlighted and commented on those instances where it was observed that the media breached the spirit and intent of the **2006 Media Code of Conduct (MCC)**, and generally, those cardinal principles underpinning acceptable journalistic best practices.

The Unit's observances are graphically depicted in the forms of bar-charts and pie-charts, which show the types and amounts of coverage given to the Parliamentary Political Parties by the print and broadcast media outside of an elections period.

This report is limited to the activities of the Parliamentary Political Parties, namely: PPP/C, PNCR-1G, AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF.

The broadcast and print media that were monitored and evaluated during this reporting period 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

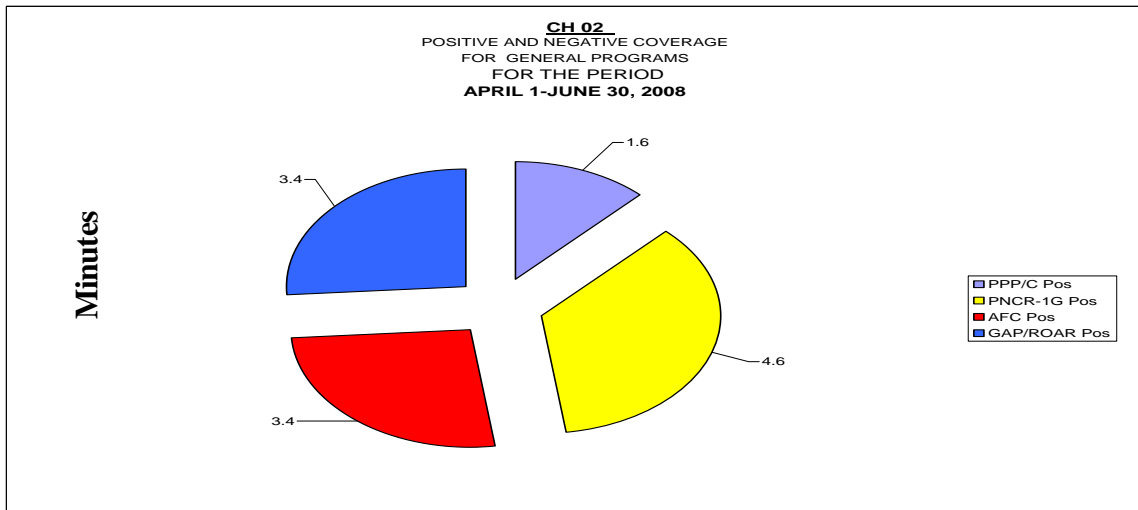
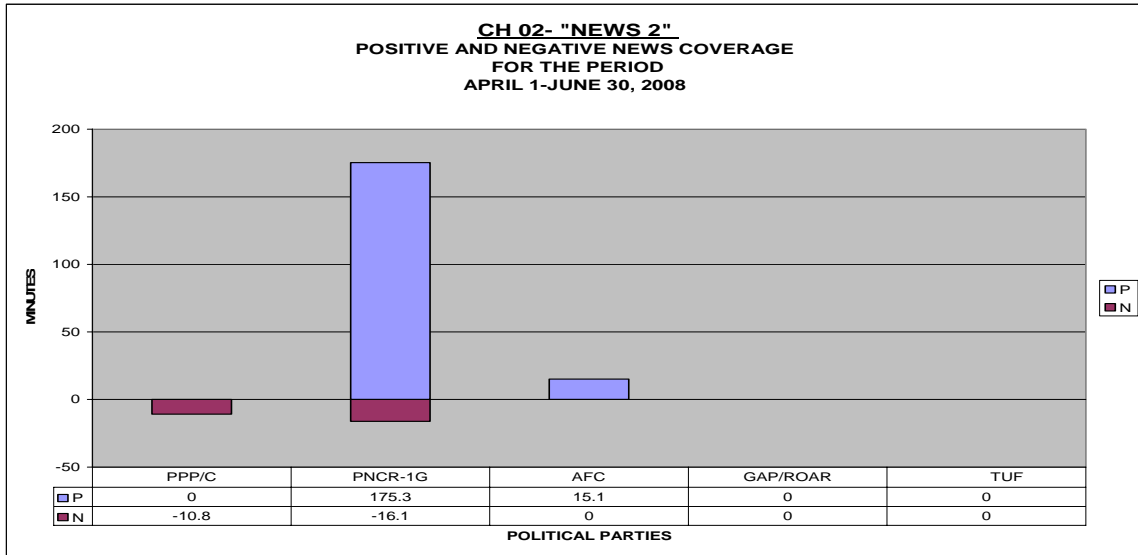
Stabroek News
Kaieteur News
Guyana Chronicle

In summary, this report sums up in a holistic way how **social, political and governance issues** among others were reported to the public, and how the activities of the five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties were disseminated through the media.

N.B:

The figures given on the **bar-charts** overleaf depict the amounts of positive and negative coverage given to the Parliamentary Political Parties by each TV Station's newscast, the VOG newscast and the newspapers. The **pie-charts** show the coverage given to the parties in the general programs of each TV 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 pie-charts highlight the types and amounts of coverage each party received during the current reporting period, all the parties are not shown on every pie-chart because once a Political Party did not receive a certain minimum amount of coverage it was not included.

Television



CH 2 "News 2" (Bar-Chart)

For this period under review, **News 2** gave the PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF zero positive coverage. The only two (2) political parties that recorded positive coverage for this period are PNC/R-1G and AFC, with the PNC/R-1G being allotted almost 11 times the amount of positive coverage the AFC received. In similar vein, negative coverage was observed and documented for only two(2) Political Parties, namely, PNC/R-1G and PPP/C, with the PNC/R-1G receiving the greater amount.

General Programs (Pie-Chart)

In the Channel's General programs, the PNC/R-1G accumulated the largest slice of total positive coverage distributed to the Political Parties, while AFC and GAP/ROAR received equal amounts. The PPP/C accumulated the least amount of positive coverage; and none of the parties were negatively covered during this reporting period.

Analysis

The huge allotment of positive coverage accumulated by the PNC/R-1G on the News 2 newscast over the past three (3) months stands out noticeably because of the paltry amount accrued by the AFC - the other Political Party that received similar coverage - and the absence of such coverage in the observations of the other Parliamentary Political Parties. As much as the figures adduced from the newscast's bar-chart suggests a pronounced inequity in the apportioning of positive coverage to the parties, this is not surprising, since it is the continuation of a trend that has been commented upon ad nauseam. In other words, the newscast's political content over the last three (3) months replicated its observed behavior over time in terms of the surfeit of positive coverage the newsteam gave the PNC/R-1G vis-à-vis the other political parties.

It is the Unit's view that if the same zeal that is exercised in sourcing and publishing information that is positive to the PNC/R-1G is equally applied by the newsteam in their coverage of the other parties, then the imbalance that is presently so blatant in the program's news content can be ameliorated in the short term.

In the Station's general programs four of the five Parliamentary Political Parties were given varying amounts of positive coverage with the PNC/R-1G receiving slightly more positive minutes than the other parties. The distribution of positive coverage to the parties for this quarter can be described as fairly equitable, and even though the timings were taken from only one (1) program- **Tape 4 Stories** - it is a model worth plagiarizing.

Comment

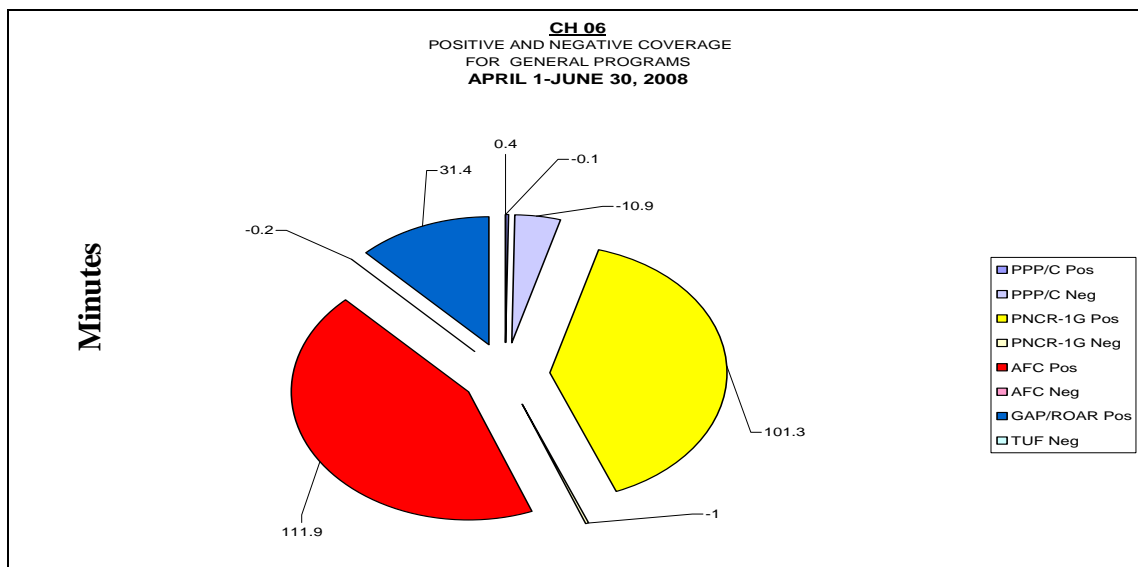
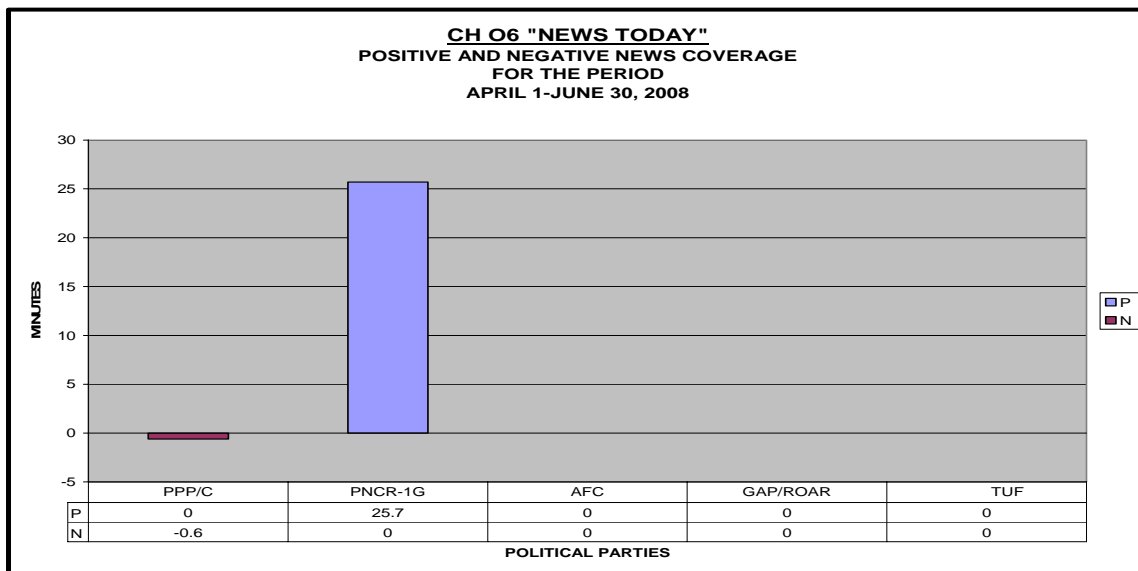
The MMU documented a gross violation of the fundamentals of professional journalism on the program **Tape 4 Stories**, hosted by Francis Quamina Farrier, and aired on Sunday, 20 April 2008. During the program an insert was shown of an attack on Mr. C.N. Sharma (host of **VOP** program, Ch. 6) that occurred at La Grange, WCD. During the video clip which lasted approximately five-minutes, the person perpetrating the assault on Mr. Sharma was heard audibly mouthing a slew of profanities. This particular scene was replayed on no less than four (4) occasions during the program.

The Unit took into consideration that the incident highlighted in the video occurred since 14 February, 1999 - over nine (9) years ago - more than ample time for the foul language to be edited out before the video's release for public consumption. This was not done, and as such the uncensored showing of the video constituted a dereliction of duty on the part of the host, and a flippant assault on public morals; the maintenance of which, practising journalists are expected to champion.

In addition, the inappropriateness of the contents of this particular program was further accentuated by the timings of the broadcast - between 16:30 hrs to 17:30 hrs (Sunday) - when it can be reasonably assumed that a large percentage of the country's children would have been glued to their TV sets, browsing the fare on offer.

N.B:

The MMU wrote the host of Tape 4 Stories, alerting him to the Unit's observations and seeking his cooperation for the avoidance of similar indiscretions in the future.



CH 6 “News Today” (Bar-chart)

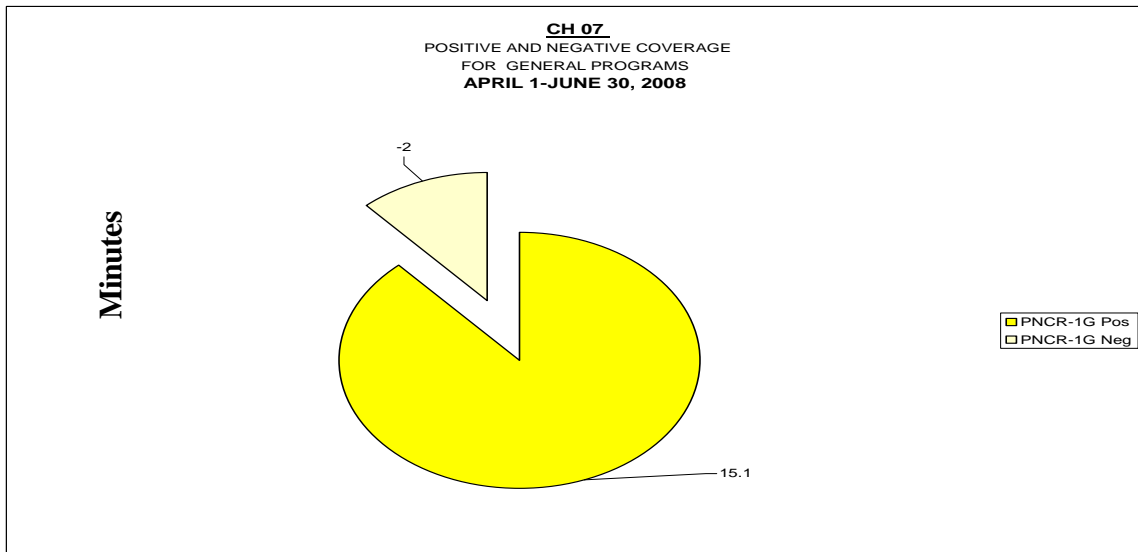
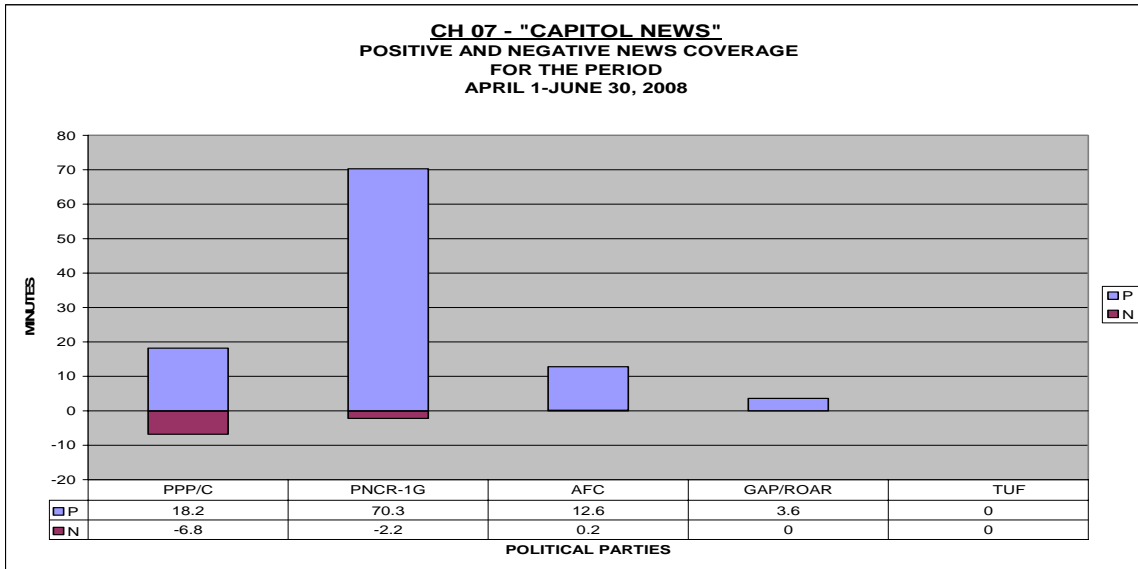
For this period under review, **News Today** allotted positive coverage to the PNC/R-1 G only and negative coverage to the PPP/C only. These timings represent the amount of minutes accumulated for the period 1st April to 11th April 2008, inclusive, after which the station was suspended from broadcasting. Up until this date (11-04-08) the PNC/R-1G was outdistancing the other parties in terms of positive coverage, while the PPP/C received a minuscule amount of negative coverage.

General Programs (Pie-Chart)

In the Station’s general programs, the AFC led the field with the highest amount of positive coverage, followed by the PNC/R-1G, GAP/ROAR and PPP/C in that order. The PPP/C received the highest share of negative coverage, followed in order by the PNC/R-1G, then AFC, with TUF obtaining the least. GAP/ROAR was not negatively covered, and the PPP/C received more than 8 times the combined total negative coverage of the other Political Parties.

Analysis

The officially imposed sanctions that resulted in the suspension of CH 6 operations from 11-06-08, meant that the figures outlined on **News Today's** bar-chart and the Station's pie-chart are reflective of just 11 days of the Unit's observances. This is not enough information for the Unit to objectively draw inferences or make grounded statistical deductions from. And even if the Unit had done a regression analysis to determine what the charts would have looked like at the end of this reporting period, if the suspension was not administered, it would be a speculative exercise, resulting in estimations that cannot be factually substantiated. With this in mind, the Unit prefers not to make any indepth analysis of the figures taken from the Station's newscast and general programs. Of factual interest though, is that the AFC and PNC/R-1G's good showing in terms of positive coverage on the Channel for the aforementioned period was a direct result of the favourable publicity the two (2) parties generated through the programs **Alliance On The Move** and **Facing The Nation** respectively, the former being short-lived, because of the Channel's removal from the airwaves.



CH 7 “Capitol News” (Bar-Chart)

For this reporting period the PNC/R-1G accumulated the largest amount of positive coverage from the newsteam of Capitol News. The PPP/C got the second highest portion of positive coverage, followed by the AFC and GAP/ROAR. Only the PPP/C and the PNC/R-1G were negatively covered, with the PPP/C receiving 3 times the negative coverage the PNC/R-1G attracted. The PNC/R-1G’s positive coverage was more than twice the combined total positive coverage given to the other political parties.

General Programs (Pie-Chart)

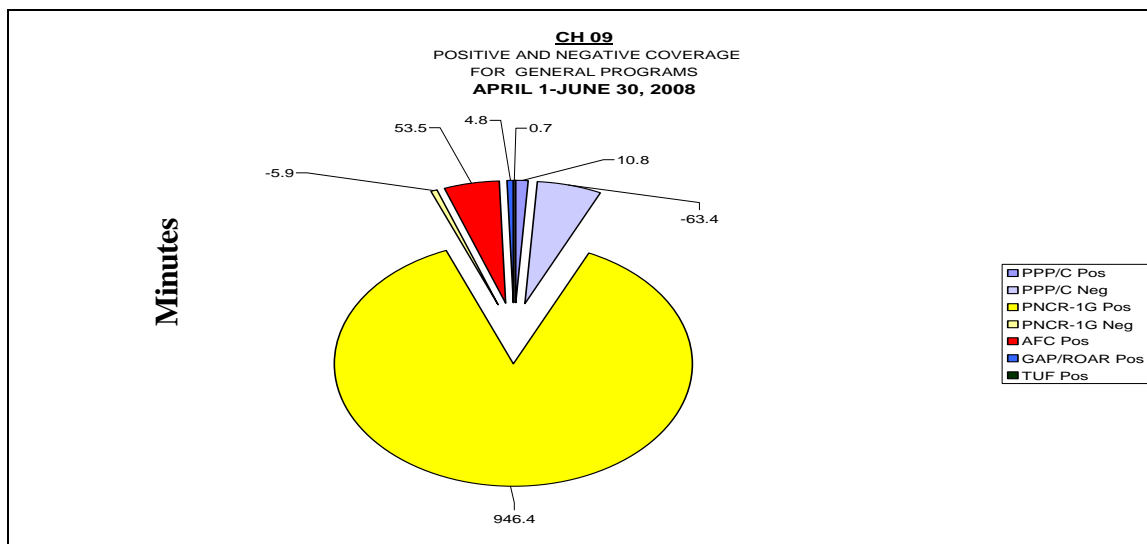
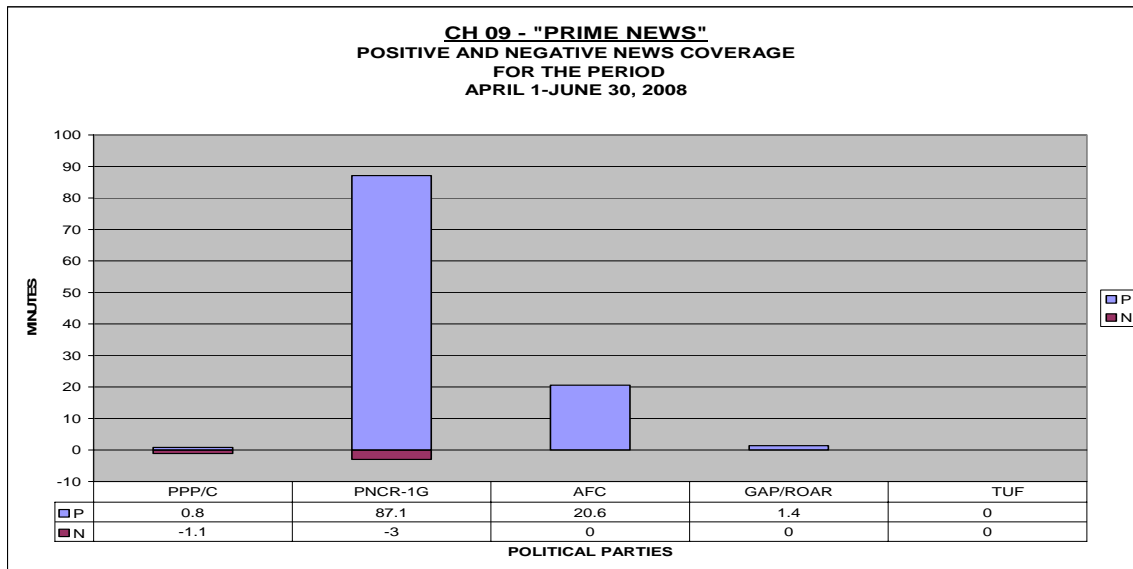
In the Station’s General programs, only the PNC/R-1G recorded any significant coverage. The positive coverage the party accrued was more than 7 times the negative coverage it absorbed.

Analysis

The PNC/R-1G's disproportionate allotment of positive coverage relative to the other Political Parties on the **Capitol News** newscast is accounted for by the Party's heightened level of activism over the past three (3) months which gave the party a more overt public profile, and enticingly made it more newsworthy than the other political parties during this reporting period.

However, despite this, the Unit would like to suggest that a more acceptable amount of balance and equity could have been achieved if the newsteam was more robust in seeking and publishing the views of the other political parties on those same issues from which the PNC/R-1G gained maximum positive coverage.

Not much could be read into the figures from the Station's general programs pie-chart, since the PNC/R-1G was the only party covered, receiving both negative and positive coverage.



Ch 9 "Prime News" (Bar-Chart)

The figures displayed on the **Prime News** bar-chart shows that the PNC/R-1G accounted for almost 4 times the positive coverage apportioned by the newsteam to all the other Parliamentary Political Parties combined, for this second quarter. The AFC got the second highest amount of positive coverage, followed by GAP/ROAR and PPP/C in that order. Only the PNC/R-1G and PPP/C received negative coverage in the newscast; however, the PNC/R-1G received nearly 3 times the amount of negative coverage given to the PPP/C.

General Programs (Pie-Chart)

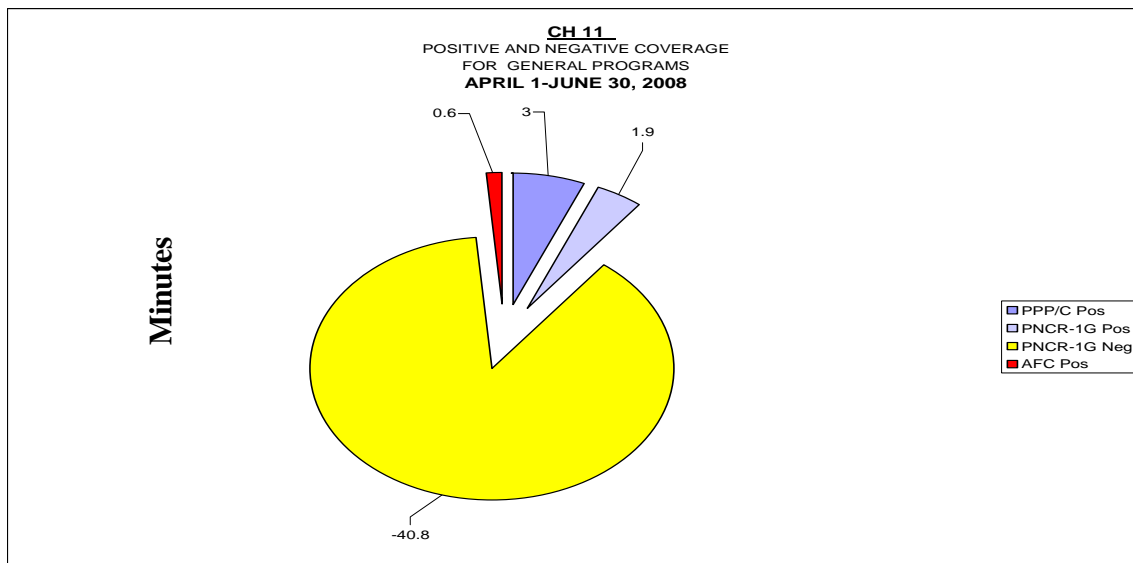
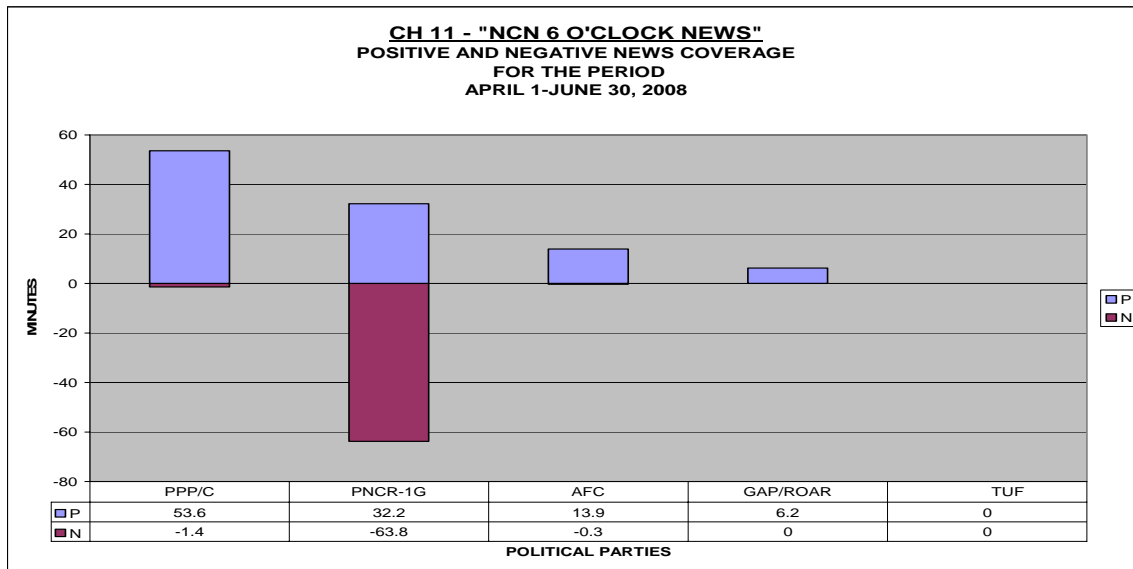
In HBTv Ch 9 General programs, the PNC/R-1G's positive coverage was competitively the largest for this reporting period. The AFC came in a distant second with over 17 times less positive coverage, followed in order by the PPP/C and GAP/ROAR, with TUF in the cellar position. The PNC/R-1G's positive coverage was just over 13 times the combined positive coverage of the other political parties.

Conversely, only the two (2) major political parties (PPP/C and PNC/R-1G) accumulated negative coverage. The PPP/C registered the largest share of negative coverage, which was over 10 times the same coverage the PNC/R-1G got.

Analysis

The figures on the **Prime News** bar-chart describing the amounts of positive airtime the Parliamentary Political Parties received through the media indicated that with the exception of TUF, all the other parties received varying amounts of positive coverage. However, a more detailed analysis of the spread presented revealed that the PPP/C had a net negative coverage when its positive coverage was juxtaposed against the negative coverage the party received. Of interest also, is that none of the smaller parties (AFC, GAP/RAOR and TUF) were negatively covered in either the newscast or in the Station's general programs. The Unit's documented observations for this quarter informed that the PNC/R-1G's humongous lead in positive coverage on the newscast has its traces in the Party's recent parliamentary and extra-parliamentary actions that of lately have been the focus of media attention.

The Station's General programs pie-chart showed that the PNC/R-1G garnered the largest slice of positive coverage and this is nothing new, since the Party's lengthy political program **Nation Watch** is broadcast twice weekly on this Channel. The PNC/R-1G's lead in positive coverage was further buttressed by the appearance of C.N. Sharma (host of **VOP**, Ch 6) on HBTV Ch 9 with a slightly modified version of the VOP program called '**Voice Of C.N. Sharma**', which as expected was highly critical of the PPP/C and Government, and complimentary of the opposition, particularly the PNC/R-1G.



Ch 11 “NCN 6 O’clock News” (Bar-Chart)

This reporting period saw the newsteam of **6 O’Clock News** apportioning positive and negative coverage to the five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties in the following way: the PPP/C gained the largest portion of positive coverage, followed by the PNC/R-1G , AFC and GAP/ROAR in that order. The PPP/C’s positive coverage was greater than the combined positive coverage received by the other political parties. The PNC/R-1G received the biggest serving of negative coverage, with the PPP/C in second place, followed by the AFC. The PNC/R-1G’s negative coverage on the newscast was more than 37 times the combined negative coverage of the other political parties. Neither GAP/ROAR nor TUF were negatively covered.

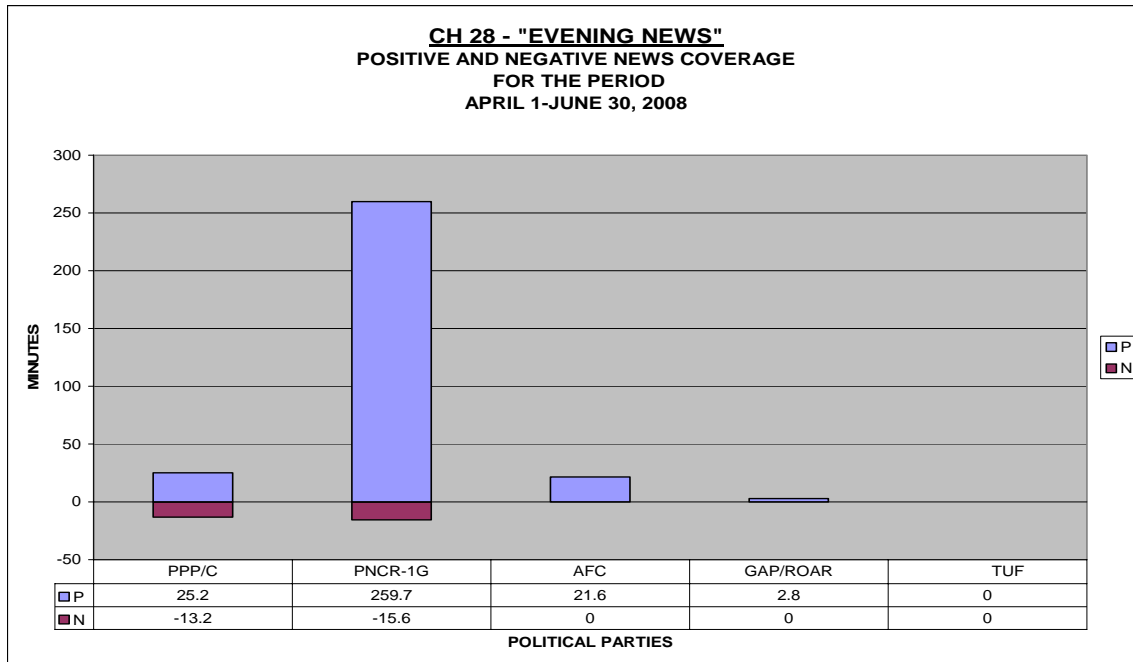
General Programs (Pie-Chart)

The figures from the Station’s pie-chart indicate that three of the five Parliamentary Political Parties received positive coverage, with the PPP/C accounting for the highest share, followed by the PNC/R-1G and the AFC in that order. The PNC/R-1G was the only political party to be negatively covered.

Analysis

The **6 O’Clock News** bar-chart is a graphic demonstration of contrasts. While all the political parties were positively covered almost equitably relative to their parliamentary ratios (with the exception of TUF), the same cannot be said for the spread of coverage given the two political parties that were negatively covered - PPP/C and PNC/R-1G. The degree of negative coverage absorbed by the PNC/R-1G was extensive compared to the amount of negative coverage the PPP/C received. The PNC/R-1G’s negative coverage effectively cancelled out the positive coverage the party received, while the PPP/C’s negative coverage did not affect its positive showing in any significant way. The Unit’s records show that the PNC/R-1G’s high negative scoreline on the 6 O’Clock News stemmed from mainly two factors: the Party’s recent public activities were primarily showcased in a negative light; and the considerate amount of airtime given to Government officials to counter the Party’s (PNC/R-1G) public positions on contemporary issues.

Similarly, the Station’s General programs pie-chart exhibited an acceptable spread of positive coverage to the three political parties (PPP/C, PNC/R-1G and AFC) that accumulated measurable coverage, however, this was negated somewhat by the comparatively expansive amount of negative coverage the PNC/R-1G was subjected to. A perusal of the Unit’s documentation to ascertain the reason for this phenomenon pinpointed that the Party’s accumulation of bad (negative) publicity emanated exclusively from the programs, **Perspectives Of The Week** hosted by Prem Misir, and **Weekly Digest** (produced by GINA).



Ch 28 “Evening News” (Bar-Chart)

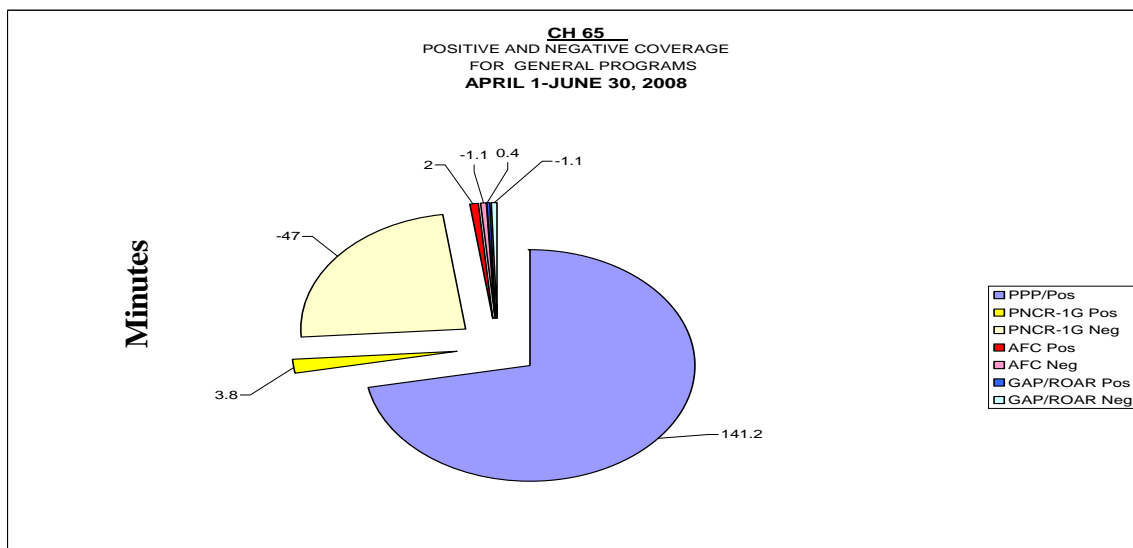
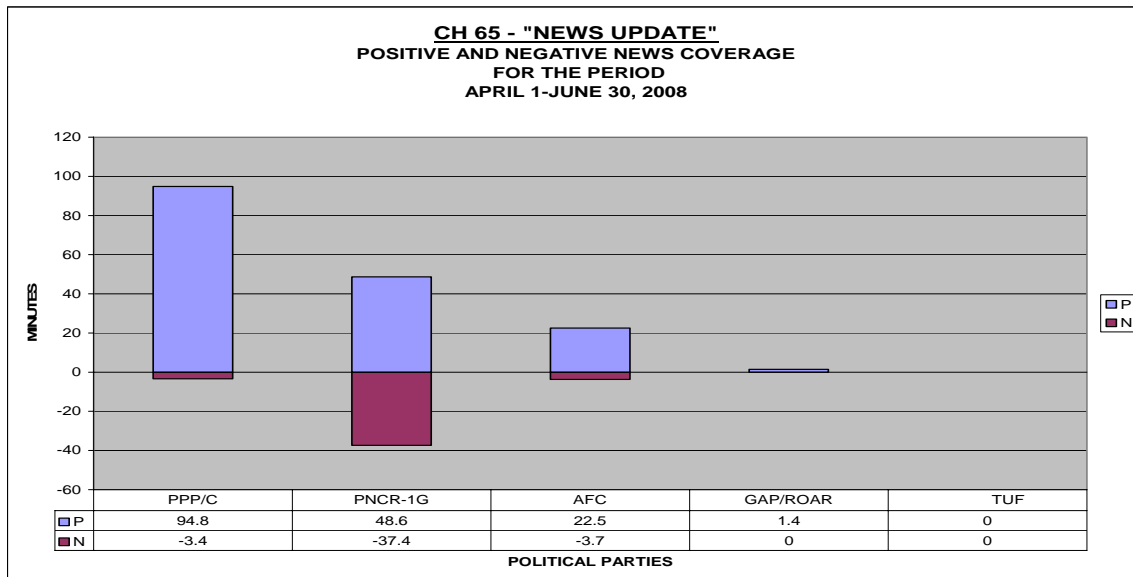
For this reporting period, **Evening News** distributed positive coverage to four of the five Parliamentary Political Parties. The PNC/R-1G got the lion’s share of positive coverage over the past three months, distantly followed by the PPP/C, AFC and GAP/ROAR in that order. The PNC/R-1G accumulated more than 5 times the combined total positive coverage of the four parties that were positively covered. Likewise, the PNC/R-1G also led the way in the negative category with the Party garnering the highest amount of negative coverage from the newscast, closely followed by the PPP/C - the two being the only political parties to receive negative publicity during this reporting period.

General Programs

No pie-chart was produced for the Station’s General programs for this quarter, because no measurable positive or negative coverage was recorded by the Unit for any of the political parties over the past three months.

Analysis

The newsteam’s achievement in giving varying amounts of positive coverage to four of the five Parliamentary Political Parties is noteworthy; however, the commendation stops here, because of the huge imbalance in the PNC/R-1G’s overall share of positive coverage. It is not unusual for the PNC/R-1G to outscore its political rivals on the positive scoresheet of this program, since this is a trend that over time has become congruent with the newscast. Despite this fact, the Unit in an effort to identify and isolate the cause(s) for the observed imbalance referenced its documented observations for this quarter, which indicated that the PNC/R-1G’s runaway lead in positive coverage on the newscast was inextricably linked to the excessive amounts of airtime that the newsteam allotted to the PNC/R-1G’s presentations in Parliament, and more specifically the offerings to that august body by the owner of the Station and publisher of the newscast, in his role as a PNC/R-1G Parliamentarian.



Ch 65 “News Update” (Bar-Chart)

For this second quarter of the year, **News Update** gave the PPP/C the highest amount of positive coverage which was almost twice the amount allocated to the second-placed PNC/R-1G. The AFC got the third highest amount of positive coverage from the newscast followed by GAP/ROAR. Only three of the five Parliamentary Political Parties came in for negative coverage from the newscast, and the PNC/R-1G racked up the largest share, followed by the AFC and PPP/C. The PNC/R-1 G’s negative coverage was over 5 times the combined negative coverage of the AFC and PPP/C.

General Programs (Pie-Chart)

In the Station’s General programs, all of the political parties with the exception of TUF obtained varying amounts of positive coverage with the PPP/C’s allocation being almost 15 times the combined total amount of the other political parties. The individual amounts given to the PNC/R-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR were measly relative to the PPP/C. Of the Political parties that received coverage, only the PPP/C was not negatively covered. The PNC/R-1G got the highest amount of negative coverage,

while AFC and GAP/ROAR were jointly positioned with equal amounts of same. The PNC/R-1G's negative coverage was more than 21 times the combined total of AFC and GAP/ROAR.

Analysis

The newscast apportioned fairly equitable amounts of positive coverage to those political parties which from a news perspective merited coverage of their activities during this quarter. The PNC/R-1G's disproportionate amount of negative coverage relative to the positive coverage the Party accumulated has its etiology in the manner in which its recent public activities were presented through the newscast, that is, mostly in a negative light. On the other hand, the PPP/C's huge advantage in positive coverage is directly linked to the latitude afforded its officials to communicate the Party's views and positions on topical issues and to countervail extant opposition charges against the party and government.

The Station's General programs pie-chart replicated the **News Update** bar-chart in many aspects, the most obvious being the PPP/C's huge lead in positive coverage and the PNC/R-1G's control of the leadership position for negative coverage. However, unlike the newscast, the pole positions of the two major political parties were directly influenced by the airing on this channel of the twice weekly, hour-long PPP/C Public Relations program, **Getting It Right**. This program is complimentary of the PPP/C and government (as is expected), and scathingly critical of the opposition, especially the PNC/R-1G.

General Observations – Television

The performance of TV during this second quarter of the year was generally at an acceptable level, with just one instance of unprofessional conduct being documented by the MMU - the uncensored and profligate use of indecent language on **Tape 4 Stories** (Ch 2). Outside of this aberration, the conduct exhibited by TV operatives was commendably of a good standard. Nevertheless, the continuing trend of inequitable political coverage given to some of the Parliamentary Political Parties is still a sore point and one that may be predictably insoluble in the short term, because of the ingrained partisan loyalties, and political interests that influence individual station policy; a fact that has been alluded to, and trenchantly analyzed in the Unit's previous reports. Moreover, the implacable actors in this dubious category are known since they have already been previously identified, hence there is no need to finger-point again. And, in any case a cursory look at the bar-charts and pie-charts in this report is enough to inform even the uninitiated of the identities of the "Party Stations".

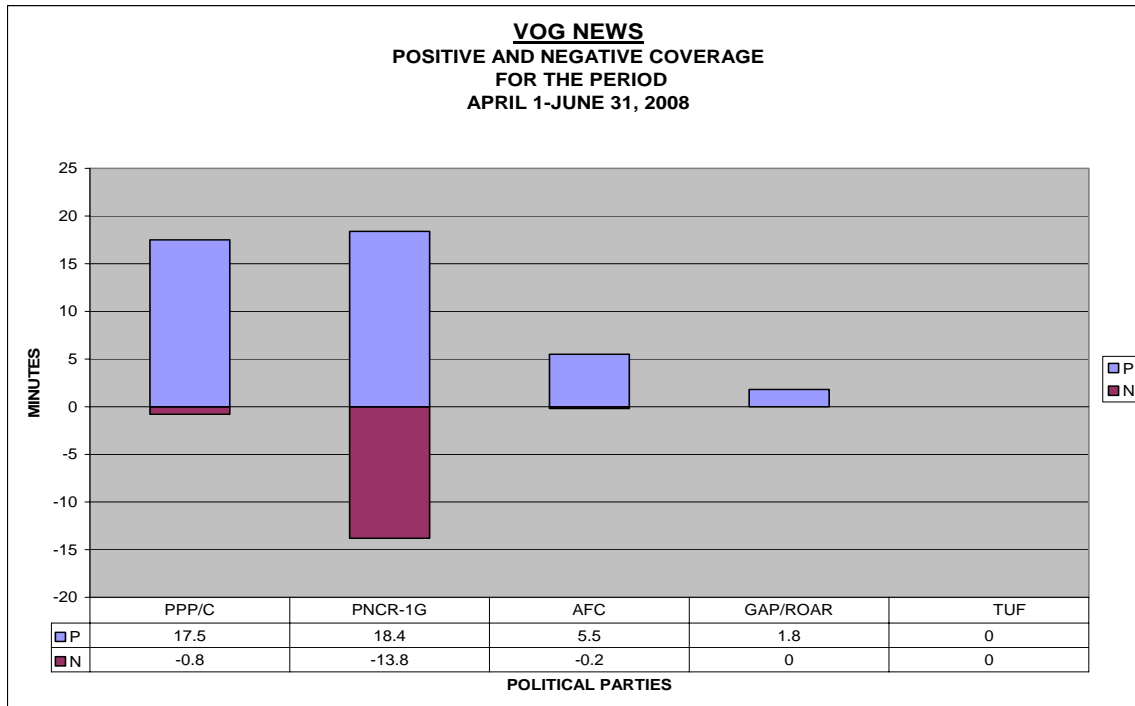
Over and above this anomaly, a token comparison between the first and second quarters revealed a welcome respite in this second quarter from the emotional and politically charged environment that enveloped and tainted the dissemination of news and information during the first quarter, and which was influenced in the main by the despicable media behavior that took hold in the wake of the Lusignan and Bartica tragedies. With the concomitant tapering off of these two events as the foci of media attention, there has been an observable and considerable lessening of misconduct and violations of the MCC during this reporting period.

Indeed, this second quarter was more like the calm after a storm. It was to a large extent a good indicator of the level to which TV journalism standards had frenetically nosedived in the first quarter of the year, through the ignominy of partisan influencers being allowed carte-blanche to manipulate the contents of what was produced by TV stations for public consumption.

CHANNEL	PARTY	COMPARATIVE POSITIVE COVERAGE(MINS)				TOTAL POSITIVE COVERAGE (MINS) Jan 1- June 30		COMPARATIVE NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS)				TOTAL NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS) Jan 1- June 30	
		NEWS		GENERAL PROGRAMS				NEWS		GENERAL PROGRAMS			
		Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS	Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS
2	PPP/C	8.8	0	0	1.6	8.8	1.6	-3.6	-10.8	0	0	-13.9	0
	PNCR-1G	113.5	175.3	0.3	4.6	288.8	4.9	-0.9	-16.1	0	0	-15.8	0
	AFC	16.9	15.1	0	3.4	32	3.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	4.2	0	0	3.4	4.2	3.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	PPP/C	9.8	0	9.9	0.4	9.8	10.3	-6.4	-0.6	-67.1	-10.9	-7	-78
	PNCR-1G	135.5	25.7	348.2	101.3	161.2	449.5	-0.9	0	-24.4	-1	-0.9	-25.4
	AFC	27	0	2.9	111.9	27	114.8	0	0	-2.2	-0.2	0	-2.4
	GAP/ROAR	6.2	0	1.3	31.4	6.2	32.7	0	0	-0.1	0	0	-0.1
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-0.5	-0.1	0	-0.6
7	PPP/C	8.6	18.2	0	0	26.8	0	-6.4	-6.8	0	0	-4.2	0
	PNCR-1G	87.8	70.3	35.1	15.1	158.1	46	-2.2	-2.2	-1.8	-2	-4.2	-3.8
	AFC	45.1	12.6	0	0	57.7	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	10.8	3.6	0	0	14.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	PPP/C	6	0.8	2.5	10.8	6.8	13	-0.9	-1.1	-42.7	-63.4	-1.7	-92.6
	PNCR-1G	115.6	87.1	817.5	946.4	202.7	1437.6	-3.1	-3	42	-5.9	-5.9	38.7
	AFC	22.9	20.6	10.6	53.5	43.5	50	-2	0	0	0	-2	0
	GAP/ROAR	3.8	1.4	2.9	4.8	5.2	7.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0.7	0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0

CHANNEL	PARTY	COMPARATIVE POSITIVE COVERAGE(MINS)				TOTAL POSITIVE COVERAGE (MINS) Jan 1- June 30		COMPARATIVE NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS)				TOTAL NEGATIVE COVERAGE (MINS) Jan 1- June 30	
		NEWS		GENERAL PROGRAMS				NEWS		GENERAL PROGRAMS			
		Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS	Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	Jan 1- Mar 31	Apr 1- June 30	NEWS	GENERAL PROGRAMS
11	PPP/C	75.1	53.6	19.7	3	128.7	22.7	-0.1	-1.4	-0.9	0	-1.5	-0.9
	PNCR-1G	68.5	32.2	24.7	1.9	100.7	26	-46.9	-63.8	-1.5	-40.8	-110.4	-36.7
	AFC	24.3	13.9	0.9	0.6	38.2	1.5	-1.2	-0.3	0	0	-1.5	0
	GAP/ROAR	1.7	6.2	0.6	0	7.9	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	PPP/C	15.8	25.2	0	0	41	0	-10.2	-13.2	-1.6	0	-22.6	-1.6
	PNCR-1G	404.7	259.7	0	0	664.4	0	-15	-15.6	0	0	-30	0
	AFC	32.7	21.6	0	0	54.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	5.2	2.8	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TUF	0.2	0	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
65	PPP/C	87.8	94.8	114.3	141.2	182.6	208.2	0	-3.4	0	0	-2.2	0
	PNCR-1G	66.7	48.6	1	3.8	115.3	4.9	-34.4	-37.4	-11	-47	-62.5	-57.9
	AFC	12	22.5	0	2	34.5	2	0	-3.7	0	-1.1	-2.8	-1.1
	GAP/ROAR	4.2	1.4	4.2	0.4	5.6	4.6	0	0	0	-1.1	0	-1.1
	TUF	0.6	0	0.6	0	0.6	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
69	PPP/C	-	-	15.8	0.2	0	16	-	-	0	0	0	0
	PNCR-1G	-	-	1.8	0	0	1.8	-	-	-14.4	-0.3	0	-14.7
	AFC	-	-	0.1	0	0	0.1	-	-	0	0	0	0
	GAP/ROAR	-	-	0.1	0	0	0.1	-	-	0	0	0	0
	TUF	-	-	0.2	0	0	0.2	-	-	0	0	0	0

Radio



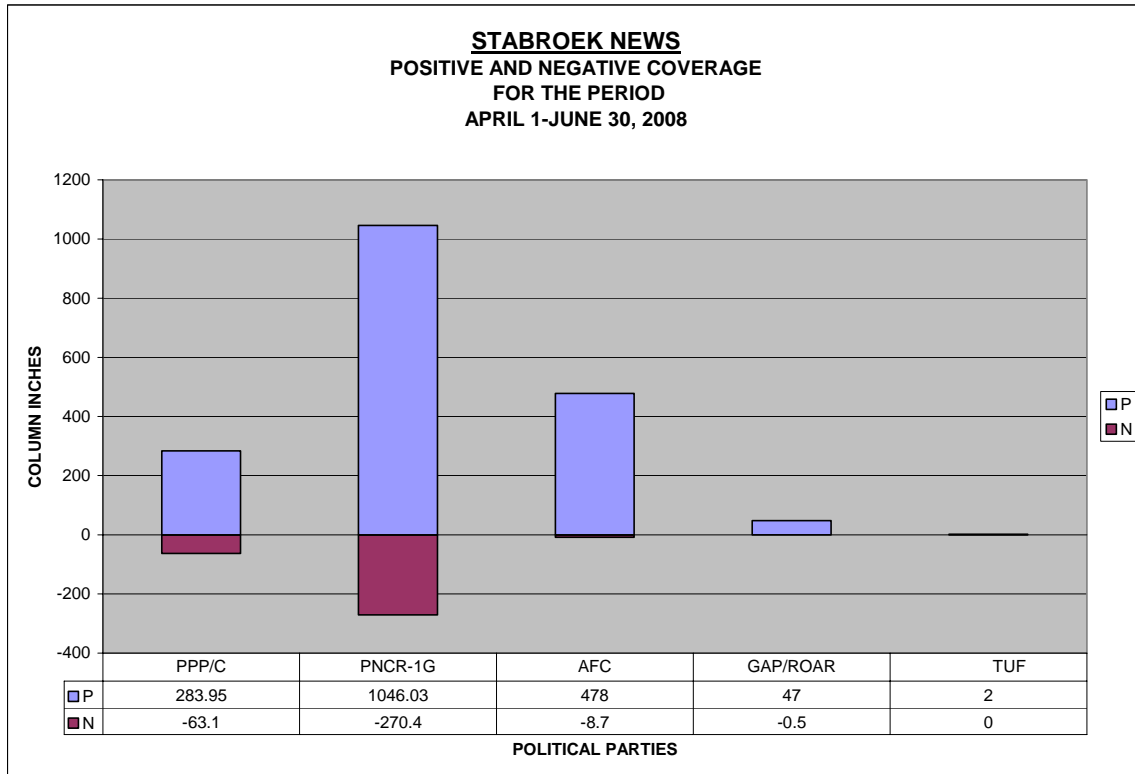
“Voice Of Guyana News” (Bar-Chart)

For the current reporting period the **VOG News** program allotted positive and negative coverage to only four of the five Parliamentary Political Parties. The PNC/R-1G garnered the largest share of positive coverage, closely followed by the PPP/C and AFC, with GAP/RAOR receiving the least. The PNC/R-1G also accumulated the highest amount of negative coverage, with the PPP/C and AFC in second and last positions respectively. The PNC/R-1G’s negative coverage on the newscast was in excess of 13 times the negative coverage received by PPP/C and AFC combined.

Analysis

The apportioning of positive coverage to the PNC/R-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR by the newsteam of VOG News was to a large degree equitable. However, the excessive negative coverage that the PNC/R-1G accrued through the newscast impacted severely on the positive coverage the Party received causing it to be left with an overall net positive coverage that placed the Party last or behind GAP/ROAR in the positive category. In comparison, the negative publicity given to PPP/C and AFC did not in the least have any undue or adverse effect on those parties positive coverage from the newscast. The PNC/R-1G’s predicament during this quarter stemmed from a predilection on the part of the newsteam to sometimes present in critical language the Party’s activities, such as its public marches/protests, press releases and press briefings, among others . The trend of TUF not recording any measurable coverage from the newscast is explainable within the context that it was mainly the PPP/C, PNC/R-1G and AFC that hogged media focus due in the main to their propensity for creating the news over the past three (3) months.

Newspapers



Stabroek News (Bar-Chart)

The **Stabroek News** newspaper for the reporting period 01-04-08 to 30-06-08 gave all five Parliamentary Political Parties varying amounts of positive and negative coverage. The PNC/R-1G obtained the largest amount of positive coverage, followed by the AFC, PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF in that order. The PNC/R-1G's share of positive coverage was more than twice that of the AFC and over 3 times the amount given to the PPP/C- its closest competitors. The PNC/R-1G also accumulated the highest amount of negative coverage, followed by the PPP/C, AFC and GAP/ROAR. TUF was not negatively covered during this reporting period. The PNC/R-1G's accumulation of negative coverage was over 4 times that given to the PPP/C and approximately 31 times the amount received by the AFC

Analysis

The PNC/R-1G's lead in positive coverage over the other political parties was occasioned to a large degree by three factors: the Party's proactive stance on contemporary social, economic and political issues which attracted more positive than negative coverage from the newspaper; the newspaper's letters column that contained a surfeit of correspondence sympathetic to the Party's public actions; and a high ratio of Stabroek News Editorials that were rated by the Unit's monitoring staff as favorable to the PNC/R-1G. The AFC, PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and to a lesser extent TUF, also received fairly decent allotments of positive coverage, but were decisively outscored by the PNC/R-1G because of the aforementioned factors. It should be noted though, that the political parties levels of activism influenced the amounts and types of

coverage they attracted from the media and for this reporting period the PNC/R-1G attracted a great deal of media attention to itself which was in most cases positive. The Stabroek News bar-chart is the graphic depiction of this reality.

Comment

The Stabroek News of Sunday, 6th April 2008, published a letter addressed to the Editor, written by Dennis Wiggins, and captioned **“Mr. Rohee’s call for a compromise is sensible but his government has shown no wish for this”** (pgs. 8-9), in which the author (Dennis Wiggins) made statements that breached the professional standards adumbrated in the MCC.

Mr. Wiggins stated the following at para. 8 of his missive:

“Most of the violent attacks involving armed robbery are committed by African Guyanese men. The horrible Lusignan massacre that is still fresh in the minds of Guyanese was no doubt perpetrated by African Guyanese men whose thinking was that in order to punish the government it (sic) must violently attack Indian Guyanese, including five children.”

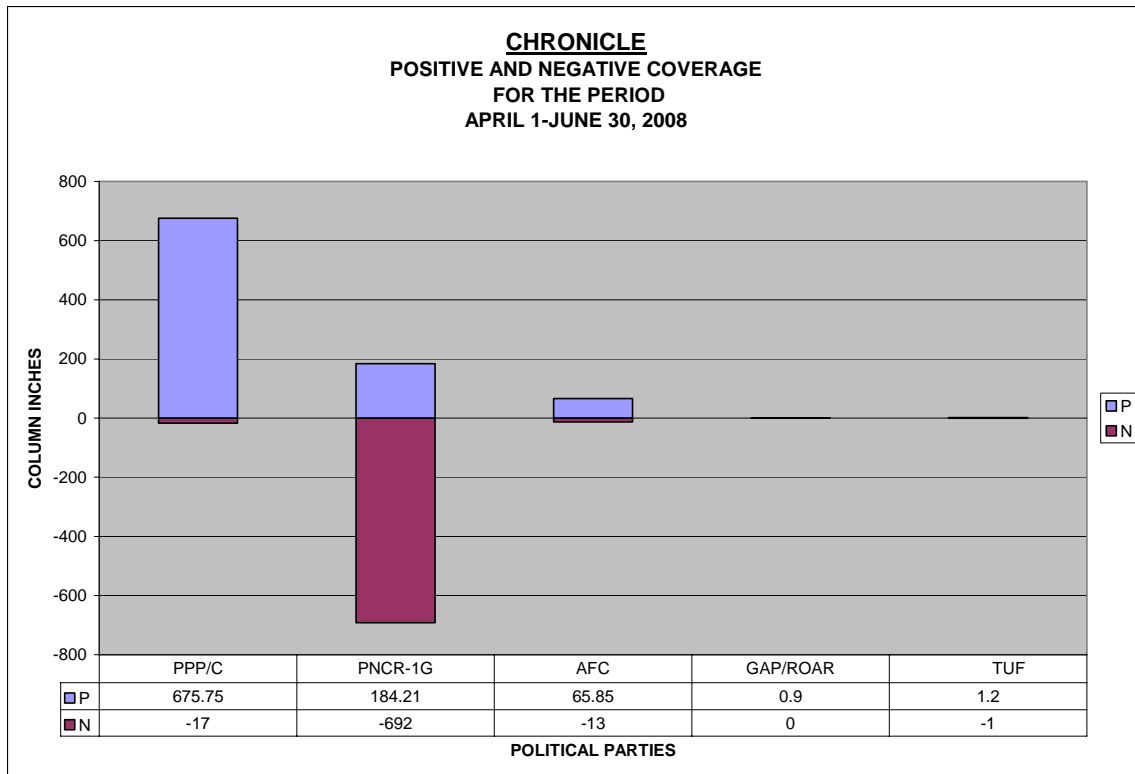
The publishing of the above statements by Stabroek News clearly infringed Article B(1) of the Code which in part constrains the media **“to refrain from publishing or broadcasting any matter with the potential for, promoting or inciting racial hatred, bias or contempt...”**

The MMU takes the informed position that the excerpted portion of Mr. Wiggins’ letter reproduced above, is racially subjective, wholly unsubstantiated and grist for the small but growing population of racial extremists in our society.

In light of the above observation, the Unit would like to advise the editorial staff of Stabroek News to be more vigilant and prudent when scrutinizing information to be communicated to the general public, lest the medium evolves into a veritable dumpsite for the propagation of racial and other forms of anti-national propaganda.

N.B:

The Editor of the Sunday Stabroek was written to by the MMU and informed of the above observation, and the urgent need to address the concerns raised so as to prevent the likelihood of same or similar violations from occurring.



Guyana Chronicle (Bar-Chart)

For this reporting period (01-04-08 to 30-06-08) the **Guyana Chronicle** newspaper distributed coverage to the five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties as follows: the PPP/C was given the largest share of positive coverage, followed by the PNC/R-1G, AFC, TUF and GAP/ROAR respectively. The PPP/C's positive coverage was more than twice the combined total of the other parties, and more than 3 times its closest competitor, the PNC/R-1G. On the other hand, the PNC/R-1G was apportioned the biggest slice of negative coverage, followed by the PPP/C, AFC and TUF, with comparatively minute amounts. The negative coverage that the PNC/R-1G received was over 3 times the positive coverage it garnered and more than 22 times the combined total negative coverage of the other political parties, which in effect left the Party with a huge surplus on the negative side.

Analysis

The layout of the Guyana Chronicle bar-chart suggests that the PPP/C and PNC/R-1G were the two political parties that dominated the political content of the newspaper for this reporting period; the other three parties (AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF) were mere peripherals in the newspaper's output over the past three (3) months. There was an observed nexus between the PPP/C's extensive lead in positive coverage and the PNC/R-1G's similar lead in negative coverage. The relationship is bonded by three facts: the majority of the newspaper's coterie of daily and Sunday columnists are unapologetically pro-government (and by extension pro-PPP/C); the newspaper's letters column is the stomping ground for anti-opposition (mainly PNC/R-1G) perspectives; and the PNC/R-1G's recent political activities were by and large consistently headlined and depicted in a negative way through the newspaper. As a consequence, this combination of factors redounded to the PPP/C's favorable showing and the

PNC/R-1G's dismal performance for this quarter. Not surprisingly, this scenario is the continuation of a trend, whereby the Opposition Parliamentary Political Parties (particularly the PNC/R-1G) do not acquire equitable or balanced coverage in the contents of the newspaper; a situation rooted in management policy that has been critically highlighted by the MMU on numerous occasions.

Comment

On Tuesday, 20 May 2008, the **Guyana Chronicle** published a letter in its 'Letters to the Editor' column captioned "**PNC/R-1G must be held accountable**" (pg. 6), written by T. King, in which certain statements made should have been edited before publication since they fell outside the boundaries of acceptable public discourse, and constituted a flagrant breach of the MCC.

Mr. King penned the following in his letter (at paras. 7&8):

"PNCR is now making good on its threat of 'slo fyah and mo fyah' by hurling a channa bomb at the Culture Ministry.

"PNCR is now making good on its threat of 'making CARIFESTA unmanageable by shooting up a hotel'"

The fact of the matter is that no individual or organization was officially identified with, or charged for the acts referred to by Mr. King. It therefore follows that the allegations made are unsubstantiated, inflammatory and politically divisive. The uncensored publishing of the allegation is cause for concern because of the obvious lack of editorial foresight that allowed its entry into the public sphere even though it lacked verity.

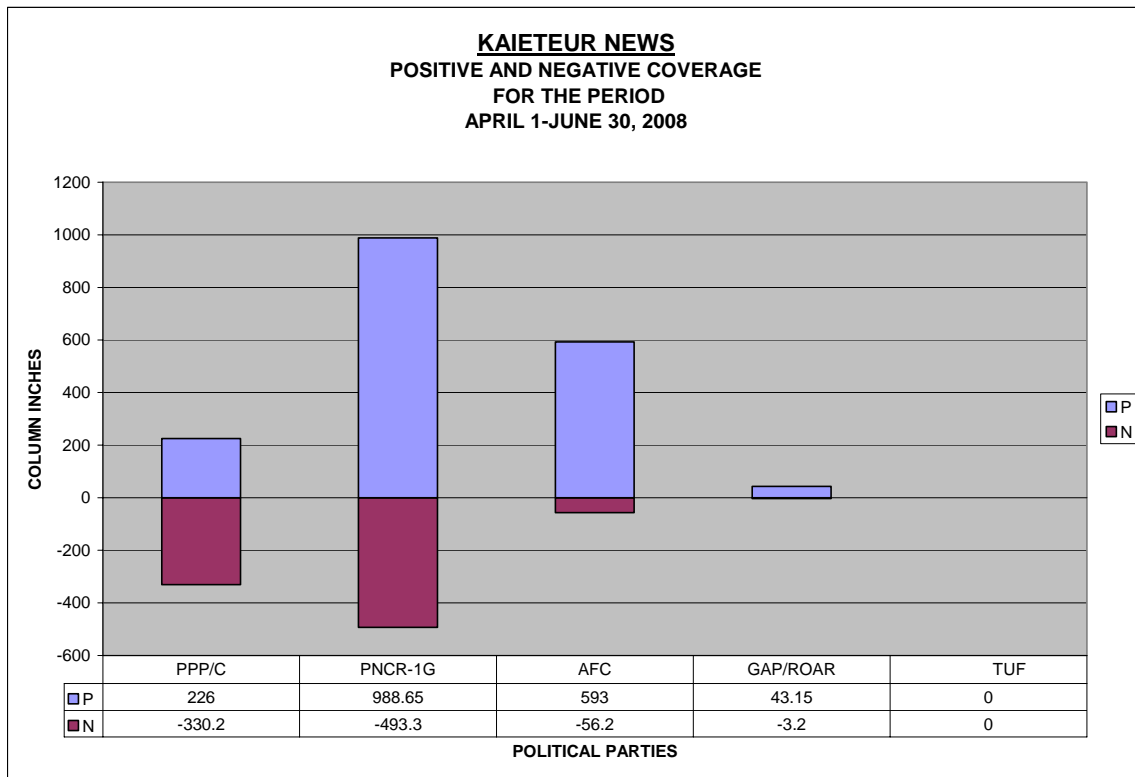
In view of the above observation, the MMU would like to refer the Editor of the Guyana Chronicle letters column to **Section 11 D (2) and H** of the MCC which reads as follows:

"No story is fair, if it includes essentially irrelevant information, rumor or unsubstantiated statements at the expense of significant facts ... the deliberate distortion of reality so as to lead the public to a particular understanding of events and issues, without regard for reality can poison the processes of democracy"

It would be fair comment to state that based on this observation, and others that have been documented in the MMU's previous reports that proper editorial controls are undoubtedly lacking at the Guyana Chronicle, and is an area that begs for remedial intervention by management in order to salvage the credibility of the newspaper.

N.B:

The editor of the Guyana Chronicle was duly informed of the MMU's observation and advised to put certain suggested measures in place to prevent a recurrence of similar violations.



Kaieteur News (Bar-Chart)

For this reporting period, the **Kaieteur News** newspaper gave coverage to the Parliamentary Political Parties in the following way: the PNC/R-1G received the largest amount of positive coverage, followed by the AFC, PPP/C and GAP/ROAR in that order. In terms of negative coverage, the PNC/R-1G also copped the largest share, followed by the PPP/C, AFC and GAP/ROAR. The PPP/C was the only party whose negative coverage was larger than the positive it received; the Party's extensive negative coverage resulted in an overall net negative coverage for this reporting period. TUF was the only political party that did not receive either positive or negative coverage from the newspaper.

Analysis

Kaieteur News editorials and the daily columns penned by Frederick Kissoon were the two main contributory factors to the PPP/C's poor showing in the newspaper for this quarter. The fact that the PNC/R-1G though receiving the greatest amount of positive coverage was also the recipient of the major share of negative coverage, infers that the Party's unexpected hyperactivity during this quarter was covered in a balanced way. The AFC accumulated an equitable amount of coverage (both positive and negative) from the newspaper, due to the Party's weekly column, and high profile interventions into extant issues of public concern. Apart from the PPP/C's skewed coverage, and TUF's moribundity, the other three political parties (PNC/R-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR) were fairly and equitably covered by the newspaper for this quarter.

General Observations – Newspapers

An evaluation done by the Unit on the performance of the three (3) dailies during this reporting period generated a conflated analysis which indicated that there were lingering residuals in the form of editorial indiscretions synonymous of the first quarter that piggy-backed onto the print media's output for this quarter. This fact was confirmed through the citing of **Stabroek News** and the **Guyana Chronicle** for infringements of the MCC, to wit, the uncensored publishing of information that was in both instances antithetical to the national good.

The continued abstruse behavior of editors in allowing the publication of inflammatory, unsubstantiated and divisive material in their letter pages is a dereliction of duty that ought to be addressed with alacrity. Continued torpor in this crucial area of media responsibility can and will predictably result in the overt and subliminal messages irresponsibly disseminated to gullible and indiscriminating minds being acted upon to the detriment of the collective. The historical lesson of Radio Mille Collines in Rwanda (08-07-93 to 31-07-94) should always be remembered and zealously guarded against, lest local media practitioners unwittingly create an environment conducive for its reincarnation here in Guyana, albeit through another section of the media - newspaper.

Conclusion

The performance of the local media for the second quarter of the year was qualitatively better compared to the performance level attained during the first quarter. There were considerably less breaches of the Code of Conduct coupled with an appreciable toning down of the stridency and peculiar bombast that characterized the contents of the broadcast (TV) and print media during the first three (3) months of the year. This is by no means though, an encomium of media behavior during the recently concluded second quarter, since the tally of three (3) breaches- one (1) in the broadcast (TV) and two (2) in print- for the period, are three too many. More than ever before this should serve as a timely and clear signal that better can be achieved, and now is the opportune time for operatives in the broadcast and print media to unshackle themselves from the pernicious influences that constrain them not to act within the professional ethics and acceptable norms of the profession.

Finally, the first and second quarters of this year have revealed in a most emphatic way that the local media's growth continues to be empirically stymied by the indiscretions of untrained, soi-disant journalists on national TV; the uncensored dissemination of inflammatory and divisive propaganda through the letter columns of the newspapers; and the sycophantic pandering to political, class and race interests by media practitioners in general. Unless these challenging stressors are assiduously tackled and ultimately expurgated from the local media environment, the profession is at great risk of remaining in an atrophied condition; a situation that the MMU is valiantly trying to arrest through its unpublicized interventions and ongoing engagements with the media fraternity.



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Remington Eastman
Manager
Media Monitoring Unit