

**Guyana Elections Commission**  
**Media Monitoring Unit (MMU)**  
**Monitoring Report: 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009– 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009**

**Introduction:**

This media Report is the first produced by the Media Monitoring Unit (MMU), of the Guyana Elections Commission, for this year (2009) and highlights the Unit's observations, analyses, conclusions and recommendations in relation to local media performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2009.

The Unit will attempt over the course of the current year to keep these Reports as concise as is practically possible, in the process, cutting down on the prolixity that characterized our previous Reports during last year (2008). Towards the achievement of this objective, the structure of this Report has been modified somewhat, with our **Observations** and **Analysis** being compressed into one (1) heading, and the **General Observations/Analyses** of TV and Newspapers subsumed under **Conclusion** for the period in review. Outside of these minor alterations, the remainder of the reporting format remains basically the same, with separate categories for Government, and the five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties. However, these categories are not likely to remain so configured for the remainder of the year, because with the expected running-off of Local Government Elections sometime later in the year, there would be a concomitant expansion of the categories to correspond with the amount of political parties (Parliamentary and Non- Parliamentary) registered to participate in the elections.

The Unit's observations of the flows of information emanating from each TV channel, newspaper, and the country's lone radio station, and their likely influence on the public's perception of the Government, and the Parliamentary Political Parties, are condensed and reflected in the figures displayed in the matrices and pie-charts constructed for each media entity; and the sections (or reporting categories) from which the information was sourced and tabulated are conveniently listed in the left-most cells of each matrix for easy reference. Further, the pie-charts displayed for each TV channel, radio station, and newspaper, are drawn to scale to show the break-down of the figures from each matrix category in their respective percentages.

The local media's coverage of the Government, and the five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties, outside of an election period, measured by the Unit in minutes (TV and Radio), and column inches (Newspaper), during the above stated period was taken from:

**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

Guyana Times

The media's reportage on the activities of the following Parliamentary Political Parties have been examined and analyzed in detail in this Report: **PPP/C, PNCR-IG, AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF.**

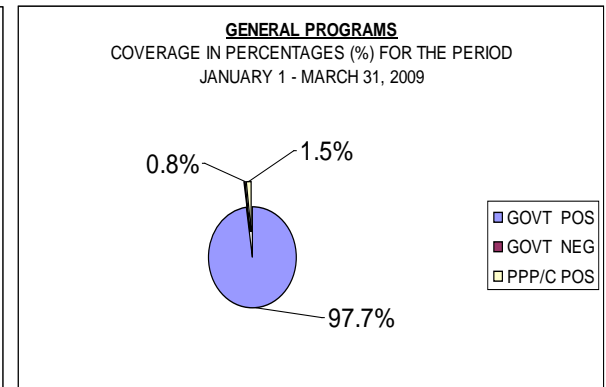
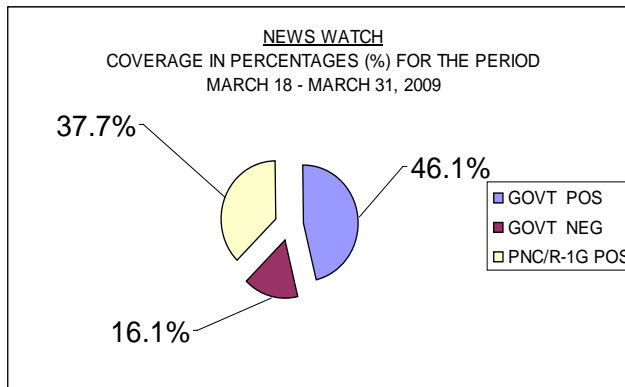
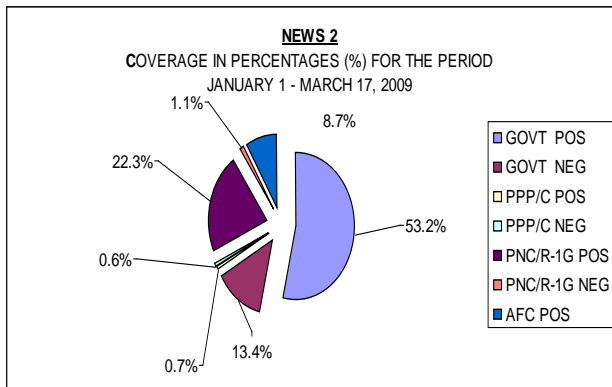
The contents of this Report adds to the volume of archival information collected over time by the Unit on local media performances, and is yet another delivery on our mandate to gauge and maintain the local media's compliance with the spirit and intent of the **2006 Media Code of Conduct (MCC)**, and their general adherence to the renowned best practices of professional journalism.

# TELEVISION

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COVERAGE FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1-MARCH 31, 2009

### GWTV CH 02

CATEGORY	GOVT (in minutes)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)									
			PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
NEWS 2	375.2	-94.5	5	-4.3	157.1	-7.7	61.2	0	0	0	0	0
NEWS WATCH	36.3	-12.7	0	0	29.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TALK SHOWS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	76	-0.6	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



### Observations/Analysis

The left hand column of the table above shows the names of two (2) newscasts – **News 2** and **News Watch**. News 2, the station’s flag ship newscast was broadcast during the period 01/01/09 – 17/03/09. It was subsequently replaced, for whatever reason, by the privately produced News Watch from 18/03/09. The figures compiled from News 2 over the aforementioned period showed that only the Government and three (3) of the

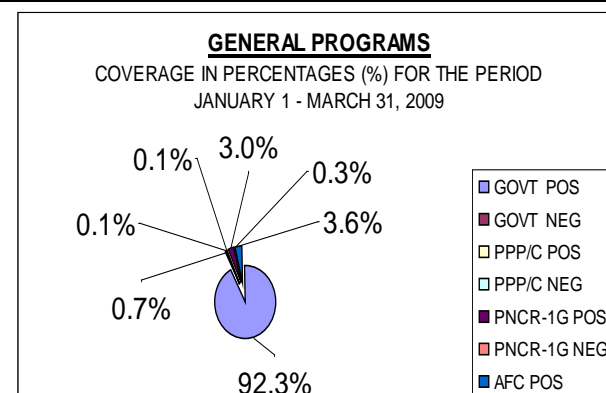
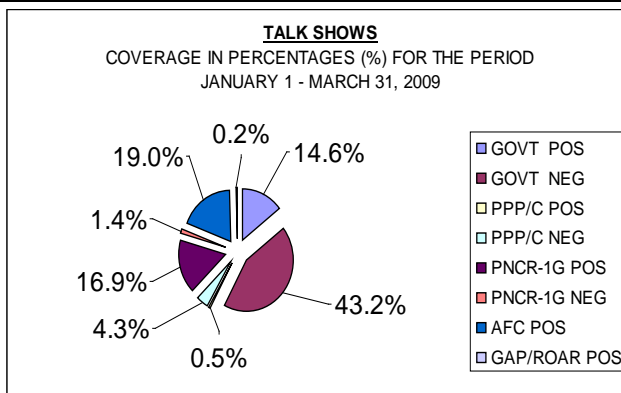
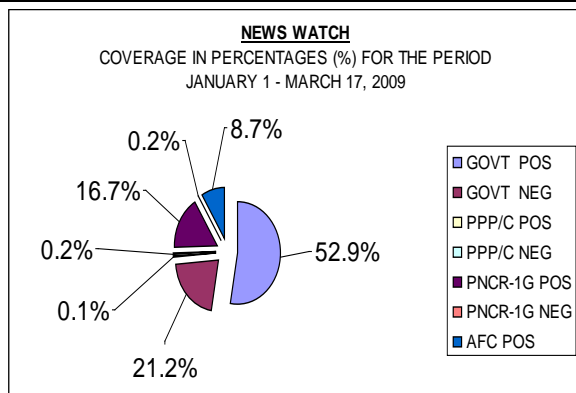
Parliamentary Political Parties – PPP/C, PNCR-1G, and AFC – commanded measurable coverage from the program’s newsteam. The Government recorded an almost **4:1** positive to negative ratio of coverage; the PNCR-1G, more than **20:1**; and the PPP/C’s coverage was nearly even with almost equal amounts of positive and negative exposures. The AFC, which did not register any negative coverage, was clearly the best covered entity for this reporting period in relative terms. The figures from the newscast suggested that the spread of coverage was commendably impartial, with the Government’s activities – political, social, and otherwise – generating significant positive airtime through the newscast, but counterbalanced with information supplied on the more robust Parliamentary Political Parties - PNCR-1G and AFC – thereby giving viewers access to news and information that was largely multidimensional. The figures calculated for the PPP/C were definitely not a true reflection of the party’s participation in, or influence on national life over the past quarter, since the numbers displayed were simply those that the Unit’s monitoring team were able to separate as being undoubtedly positive or negative to the party as distinct from the Government per se. All facts considered, the performance of the newsteam for the truncated period in which they operated was good – on a performance scale with extremities between bad and excellent.

The figures from the **News Watch** newscast, as stated before, are really a summarization of a mere two (2) weeks of programming. However, for the short period in review, only the Government and the PNCR-1G accumulated coverage of any kind, which did not amount to much in terms of generating a detailed analysis.

The station’s programming guide over the past three (3) months was devoid of any **Talk Shows**. And, in the **General Programs** section, information positive to the Government dominated, due mainly to the unmatched ascendancy of GINA (Guyana Information Agency) produced programs that percolated within the category over the last quarter.

## CNS CH 06

CATEGORY	POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)											
	GOVT (in minutes)		PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
NEWS WATCH	215.5	-86.3	0.6	-1	67.9	-0.8	35.6	0	0	0	0	0
TALK SHOWS	61.2	-181.3	2	-18	71.1	-5.8	80	-0.1	0.7	0	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	583.5	-4.5	0.4	-0.6	19.2	-1.7	22.6	-0.1	0.3	-0.1	0	0



### Observations/Analysis

For the current reporting period, the privately produced newscast, **News Watch**, which is usually broadcast from this Channel, did not do so for the entire period under review as their presence was limited to the period 01/01/09 – 17/03/09, after which, the program switched to GWTV Ch 02. The period of the program's operation on CNS Ch 06 was nevertheless long enough to elicit substantial figures for the Government, and two (2) of the Parliamentary Political Parties. The coverage that the newscast gave to the Government and the political parties showed that the PNCR-1G and the AFC were generously allocated net positive coverage of varying levels. The best ratio of positive to negative coverage was delivered to the PNCR-1G, followed by the AFC, in that order. The PPP/C was the only political party that attracted net negative publicity, which was almost unnoticeable. The Government attracted a ratio of positive to negative publicity from the newscast of over **2:1**. From the Unit's standpoint, the slight of minimal coverage given to the ruling party (PPP/C) by the newscast did not measurably subtract from their valiant efforts during this reporting period to present viewers with a professionally balanced newscast, where the contending perspectives to the issues in the news were given proportional and unbiased airtime.

The **Talk Shows** section was saturated with programs produced and presented by opposition political parties (both inside and outside of parliament), and as such, the figures collated by the Unit's monitoring team for this quarter were not surprising revelations, as they related to the

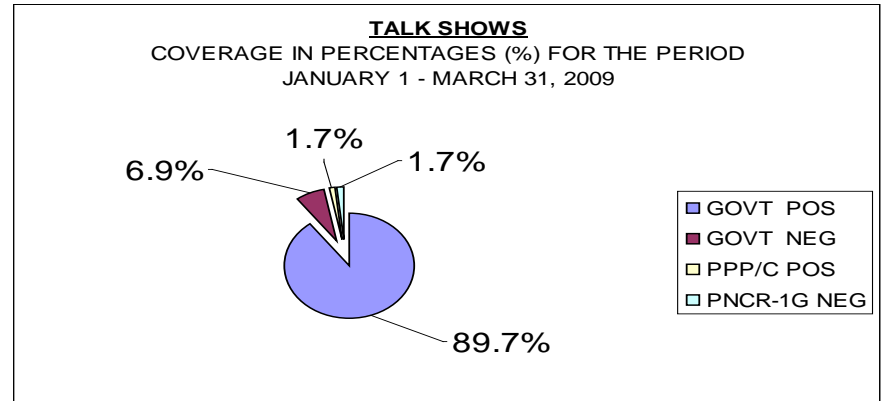
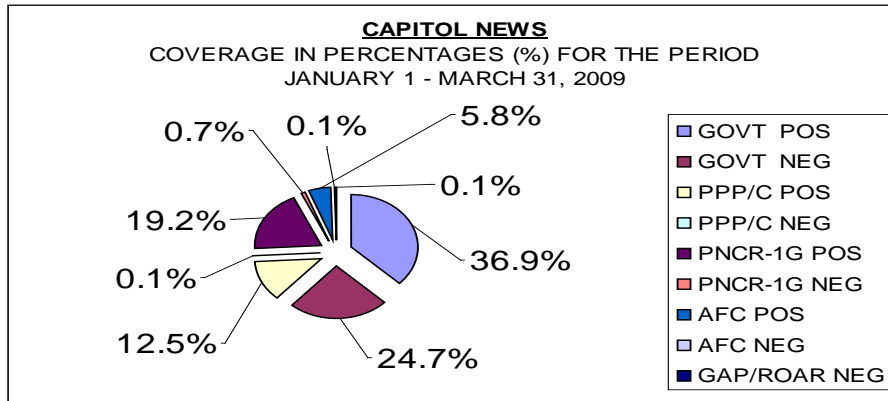
accumulations of positive and negative coverage assembled by the Government and the ruling party (PPP/C) on one hand, and the two (2) main opposition Parliamentary Political Parties on the other. The Government acquired nearly **3** times more negative than positive coverage, while the PPP/C's ratio was exactly **9:1**. Dissimilarly, the PNCR-1G's positive to negative ratio of coverage was around **12:1**, while the AFC's share was approximately **65** times the PNCR-1G's ratio of positive to negative coverage, meaning that the AFC was the recipient of the highest amount of net positive coverage within this section of the station's programming. The lop-sidedness of the figures from the Talk Shows in favour of the AFC and PNCR-1G was however counterpointed to a large extent by the generous positive coverage that the Government attracted in the General Programs section.

The information disseminated through the **General Programs** section to the viewing public conveyed net positive coverage for the PNCR-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR, but a slightly (almost inconsequential) net negative coverage for the PPP/C. As a matter of fact, the Government trumped all-comers in this section for positive coverage, and this outcome is a direct result of the profusion of GINA produced programs screened through this particular medium.

In general, even though the Talk Shows and General Programs yielded varying biases and imbalances either for or against the Government and ruling party at one extreme, and the Parliamentary Opposition Parties at the other, the overall picture that emerged this quarter suggests that a fairly acceptable level of equity was accomplished by the station's management in the combined output of the three (3) sections of the Channel's programming.

**WRHM CH 07**

CATEGORY	POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)											
	GOVT (in minutes)		PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
CAPITOL NEWS	165.4	-110.7	56.2	-0.4	86.3	-3	26	-0.4	0.2	-0.4	0	0
TALK SHOWS	5.2	-0.4	0.1	0	0	-0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



**Observations/Analysis**

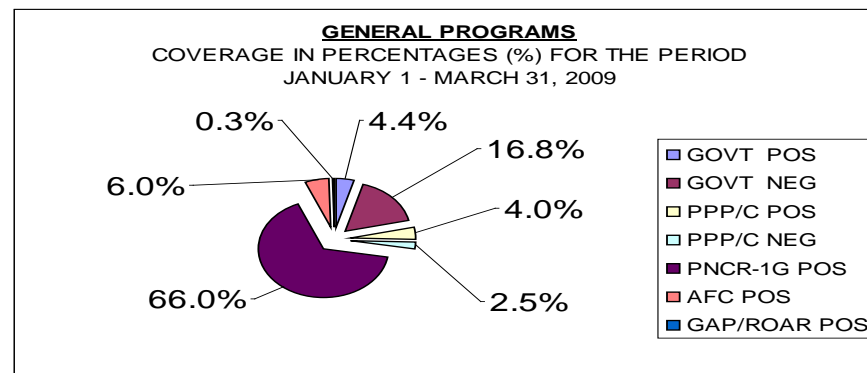
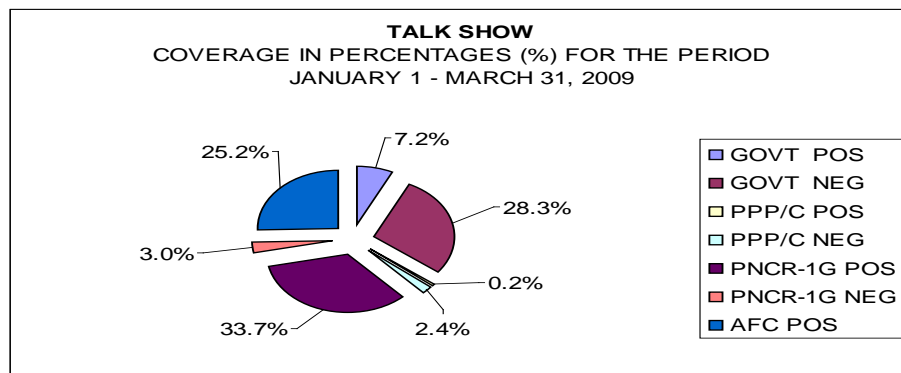
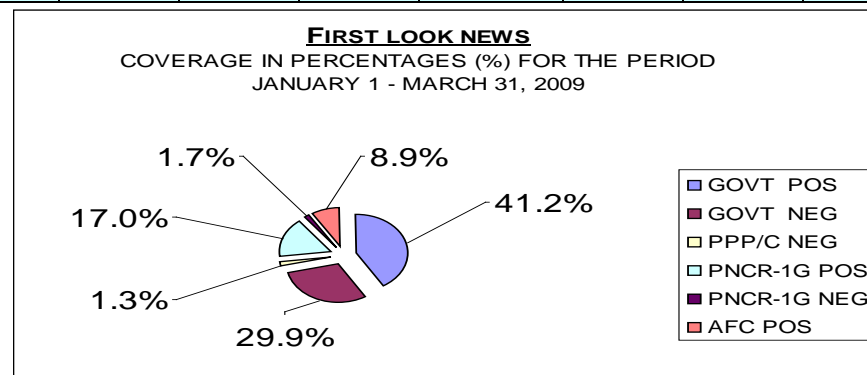
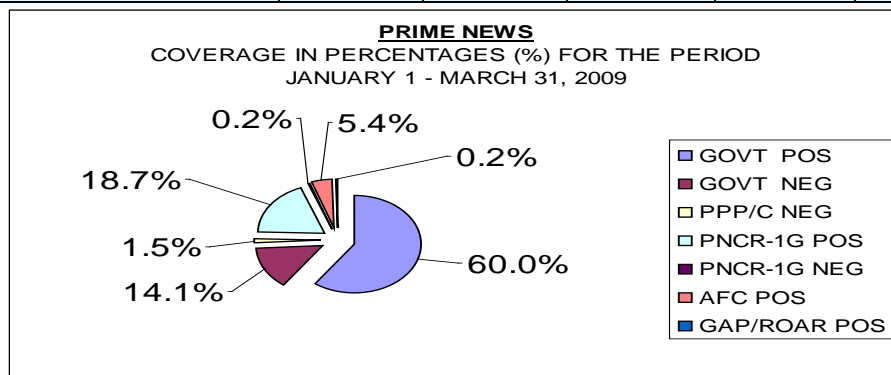
For this reporting period, the newsteam of **Capitol News** portrayed Government’s activities manifestly more positive than negative. This trend (more positive than negative coverage) was replicated with unerring consistency amongst three (3) of the Parliamentary Political Parties – PPP/C, PNCR-1G and AFC. At a glance, the configuration of the figures appended in each of the political parties columns, bespoke a spread of coverage by the newsteam which redounded to the PNCR-1G gaining the largest share of positive coverage, followed in order by PPP/C, AFC, and lastly GAP/ROAR. However, when the quantum of negative publicity each party absorbed was factored in, the sequence changed dramatically in terms of the ratios of positive to negative coverage to read instead: PPP/C, AFC, and PNCR-1G. The PPP/C’s positive to negative ratio was just over a whopping **140:1**; the AFC **65:1**; and the PNCR-1G around **29:1**. GAP/ROAR ended up with net publicity that was imperceptibly tilted to the negative side. There is arguably no valid criticism that can objectively and successfully be applied to the amounts of airtime and kinds of publicity accorded to the Government and each of the Parliamentary Political Parties by the newsteam, and, to crown it off, the newscast’s performance for this first quarter signally conformed to the fundamentals underpinning balance, equity and fairness in news reporting.

The Channel's **Talk Shows** encompassed only one (1) program with local content – **Eye On The Issues** – and the figures put together from it over the past three (3) months were not significant enough to generate an indepth analysis.



## HBTV CH 09

CATEGORY	POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)											
	GOVT (in minutes)		PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
PRIME NEWS	201.1	-47.2	0	-4.9	62.5	-0.6	18	-0.1	0.8	0	0	0
FIRST LOOK NEWS	82	-59.6	0	-2.6	33.8	-3.4	17.8	0	0	0	0	0
TALK SHOWS	47.3	-186.7	1.4	-15.7	222	20.1	165.8	-0.3	0.3	-0.3	0.3	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	19	-72.1	17.3	-10.7	282.6	-0.2	25.5	0	1.3	0	0.2	-0.2



### Observations/Analysis

For the period in review, the newsteam of **Prime News** accredited the Government with the largest distributions of positive and negative coverage. The Government's allocation of positive coverage was approximately 4 times the negative coverage they received. The coverage listed for the Parliamentary Political Parties indicated that the PNCR-1G, AFC, and GAP/ROAR collected net positive coverage, while the

PPP/C attracted net negative publicity. The figures adduced for the Government and the political parties that received measurable coverage, except for the PPP/C, conveyed a semblance of fairness and equity in the newsteam's reporting to the country's citizens. However, the figures displayed on behalf of the PPP/C are reflective of a glaring omission by the same newsteam to report information of a positive nature on the party's activities; and, this is not altogether surprising since it is a trend that was observed during most of last year, which was linked then, and still is now, to the newsteam's observed lack of verve in providing proportional airtime to the party on the newscast.

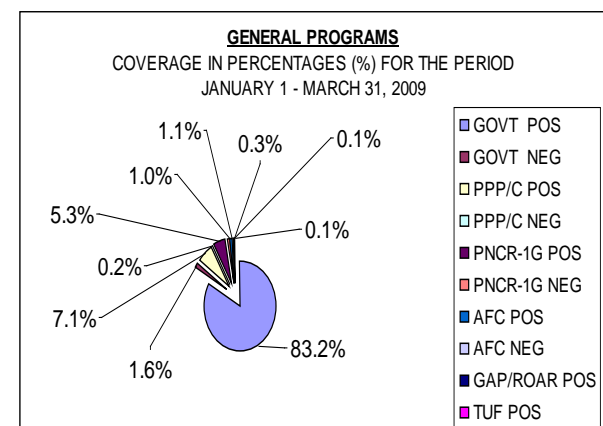
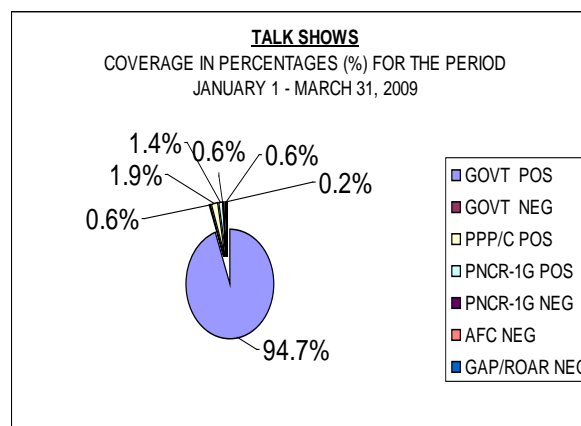
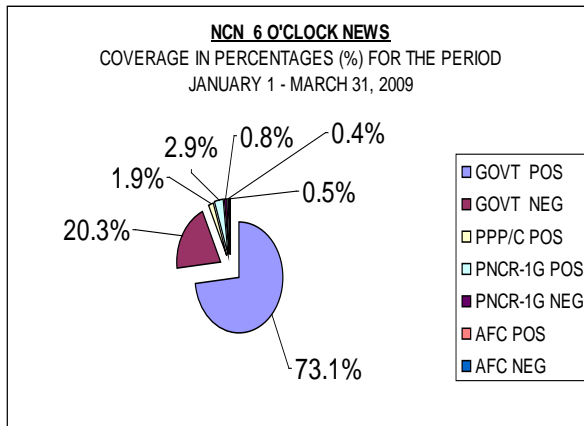
**First Look News** provided a slightly modified version of Prime News' coverage for the Government and the Parliamentary Political Parties; the difference being in the actual figures tallied for each entity. The Government and the main Parliamentary Opposition Parties - PNCR-1G and AFC – all received net positive coverage, while the PPP/C was adorned with net negative publicity. However, unlike Prime News, the salient feature of this newscast over the past quarter was the consistent juxtaposing of favourable Government news with the variant inputs of the two (2) main opposition political parties (PNCR-1G and AFC) on the same issues, which lent to a desirable level of equitable news reporting for the current period. It also explains the source of the negative timings calculated for the Government and the ruling party (PPP/C) on one hand, and the positive timings summed up individually for the PNCR-1G and AFC on the other.

The timings from the Station's **Talk Shows** were unevenly disaggregated with the Government being deluged with net negative coverage, and the PPP/C suffering the same fate amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties. The PNCR-1G accumulated the most positive coverage for the political parties, followed not too far behind by the AFC. The PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF attracted up relatively insignificant amounts of positive coverage. The PNCR-1G was also inundated with the largest share of negative coverage, followed closely by the PPP/C, with AFC and GAP/ROAR receiving the least of such coverage. The actual figures produced by the Unit's monitoring team specified that the Government's negative to positive ratio of coverage was almost **4:1**; and the PPP/C's was approximately **11:1**. The PNCR-1G positive to negative ratio was **11:1**, and the AFC's was unrivalled at over **552:1**. The Government and the PPP/C's poor showing in this category is explainable within the context that this medium (or category of the Station's programming) is the hallowed turf of the two (2) main Parliamentary Opposition Parties – PNCR-1G and AFC – evidenced by the extensive amounts of airtime allocated to the programs produced and presented by the two entities. The bulk of positive timings for the PNCR-1G and AFC were generated from the programs **Cross Talk and AFC On The Move**, respectively; likewise, the majority of negative timings distilled on the Government and PPP/C originated from the same programs, and to some extent from the program **Groundings**, produced and presented by the WPA (a non-parliamentary political party). Based on the Unit's observations over the last quarter, the majority of Talk Shows, with the exception of **Spotlight**, which were aired on the Channel, had a distinctly anti-Government and anti-PPP/C bias.

From the Channel's **General Programs**, the Government acquired net negative publicity, while the Parliamentary Political Parties were each apportioned with net positive coverage, except for TUF, whose positive and negative coverage, though minute, was of equal amounts. The PNCR-1G took the lion's share of positive coverage amongst the political parties, and was distantly trailed by the AFC, PPP/C, GAP/ROAR and TUF. The PNCR-1G's positive coverage was more than **6** times the combined positive coverage raked in by the other parties. And, notably, the Government's ratio of negative to positive coverage was around **4:1**. The PNCR-1G's runaway lead in positive coverage amongst the political parties is attributable to the many Press Conferences that the party chose to publicize on the Channel, and from its program **Nation Watch**. Similarly, the AFC positive timings were dissected from the slew of Press Conferences disseminated from the Channel by the party. The Government and the PPP/C's positive timings came exclusively from GINA produced programs aired on the Channel, while their respective negative coverage was derived almost exclusively from those programs that boosted the positive timings of the two (2) main Parliamentary Opposition Parties.

## NCN CH 11

CATEGORY	POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)											
	GOVT (in minutes)		PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
NCN 6 O'CLOCK NEWS	1382.2	384.7	36.6	-0.1	55.7	-14.2	8.5	-9.6	0	-0.2	0	0
TALK SHOWS	1443.7	-9.3	28.4	0	21	-8.9	0	-9.9	0	-3.3	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	3568.5	-67.9	305.2	-8.2	228.1	-42.2	47.6	-14.5	3	-0.6	4.4	0



### Observations/Analysis

For the current reporting period, the figures produced from the **NCN 6 O'Clock News** program, divulged that the newsteam's coverage of the activities of the Government and the Parliamentary Political Parties, resulted in net positive timings being given to the Government, and similar publicity accorded to the PPP/C and PNCR-1G from amongst the political parties. The AFC and GAP/ROAR recorded net negative publicity of negligible amounts. The Government was apportioned a ratio of positive to negative coverage that was over **3:1**. And amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties, the PNCR-1G garnered the greatest share of positive coverage followed in order by the PPP/C and AFC. When the negative publicity that the PNCR-1G received was taken into consideration, a re-examination of the figures showed that the PPP/C gained the best ratio of positive to negative publicity at **336:1**, followed desultorily by the PNCR-1G at around **4:1**. The figures tallied from the newscast hinted at a preponderance of favourable Government information disseminated through the medium (newscast), but this is to be expected, since the station is state-owned. Unfortunately though, an unsavory feature of the newscast was that the unbridled zealotry exhibited by the newsteam in portraying the Government and ruling party in a positive light led to a pronounced imbalance in the program's

content, with the Parliamentary Opposition Political Parties views on issues of public interest afforded seemingly controlled publicity relative to the Government's and the PPP/C's.

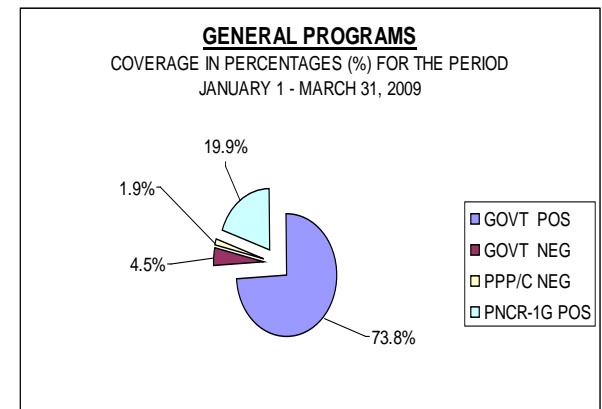
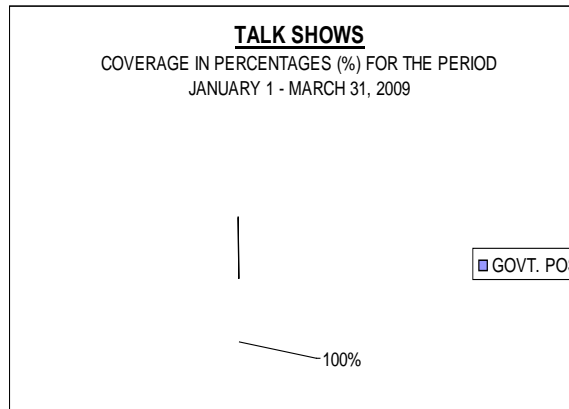
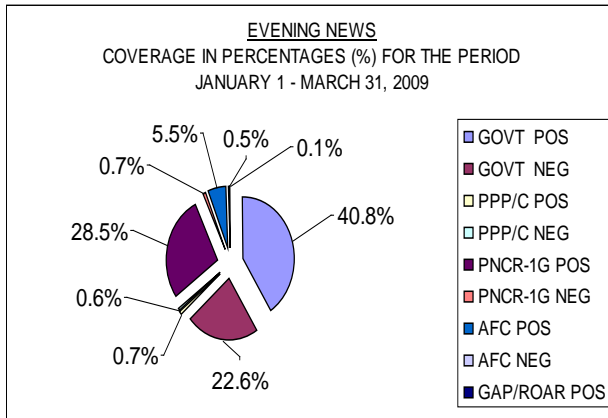
From the Station's **Talk Shows** the Government was covered with superfluously more positive than negative coverage. The spread amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties revealed that the PPP/C commanded the largest slice of positive coverage in this section of the station's programming. Contrastingly, the AFC and GAP/ROAR attracted only negative publicity from the programs broadcast during this current reporting period. The AFC contracted the largest amount of negative coverage, followed by the PNCR-1G and GAP/ROAR, in that order.

The Station's **General Programs** listed figures which were also highly favourable to the Government in terms of positive to negative coverage (over **52:1**). Further, the coverage given to the Parliamentary Political Parties presented an encouraging picture of relative fairness as each entity received net positive coverage, of varying magnitudes, which can empirically be equated with their parliamentary sizes and levels of parliamentary and public activism for the period in review.

An unbiased analysis of the overall programming of the Channel, suggests that a heavy preponderance of Government information saturated all three (3) categories of the station's output, and this virtually overwhelmed and diluted (if not totally shut-out) countervailing views from successfully reaching the general public. This was patently typified in the editorial selections of news items pertaining to the 2009 Budget presentations in parliament; the choice of personalities invited as guests on the Channel's Talk Shows; and the construct of GINA's programs that monopolized the Station's General Programming category. The hybrid combination of these three (3) aspects of the station's programming resulted in programs that were imbalanced, and this is a pertinent observation, because unlike the other channels that abound the local TV spectrum, this Channel is state-owned, meaning that it is owned by the people of the country, and is therefore expected to provide information to the general public that is fair, equitable and balanced.

## VCT CH 28

CATEGORY	GOVT (in minutes)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)									
	POS	NEG	PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
			POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
EVENING NEWS	244.4	-135.2	4	-3.6	170.7	-4.4	33.1	-3.2	0.4	0	0	0
TALK SHOWS	26.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	119	-7.2	0	-3	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



### Observations/Analysis

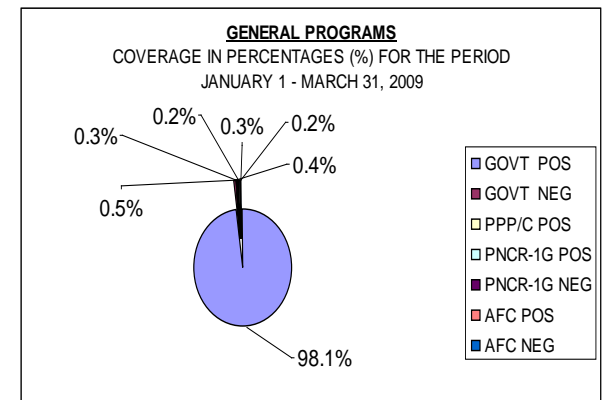
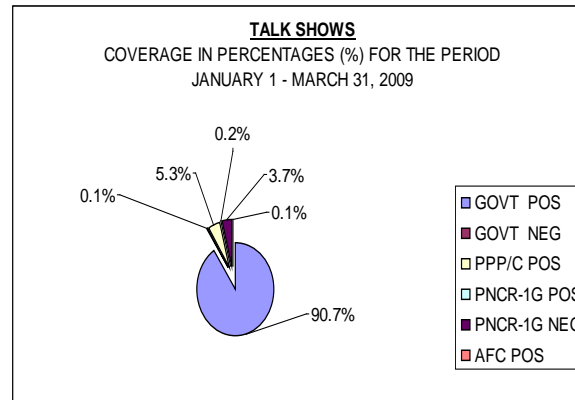
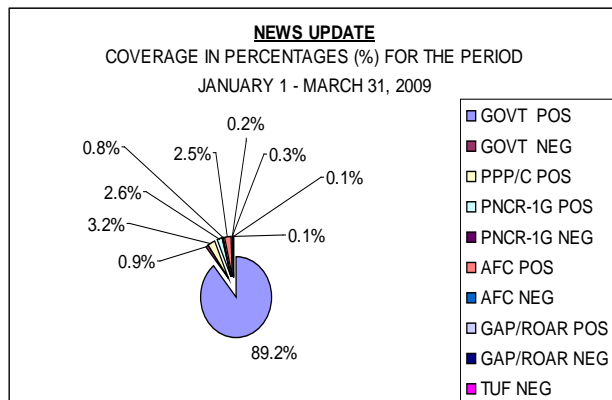
The display of figures from the **Evening News** newscast for the current reporting period explicated that the Government was given a greater amount of positive than negative coverage, while amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties the newsteam allotted the PNCR-1G with the largest share of positive coverage, followed in order by the AFC, PPP/C and GAP/ROAR. Although the Government's coverage from the newsteam resulted in net positive coverage to them (Government), the negative publicity attached to their image was relatively substantial. The coverage allocated to the political parties was singularly eye-catching because of the huge difference between the positive coverage carved out to the PNCR-1G in comparison to the uncompetitive amounts siphoned to the other Parliamentary Political Parties. The PPP/C's coverage though nearly balanced, was disproportionately small; likewise, the AFC's coverage which veered to the positive side, was in all respects, disproportionate to the PNCR-1G's ratio of coverage. In fact the PNCR-1G received more than 4 times the positive coverage given to the PPP/C, AFC and GAP/ROAR combined. The high amount of negative timings culled for the Government from the newscast was reflective of the magnitude of airtime allowed

officials of the PNCR-1G in particular, and the AFC, to articulate their organizations positions on important public issues, and to respond to, and counteract information favourable to the Government which is what equity and balance in news reporting is all about. However, the expressed figures are also a scathing indictment in more ways than one, of the newsteam's unabashed predisposition towards the main Parliamentary Opposition Party (PNCR-1G), relative to the other Parliamentary Political Parties, in the coverage and reportage of their activities over the past three (3) months.

The Station's **Talk Shows** consisted of a few GINA produced programs from which only the Government received positive publicity. The **General Programs** section on the other hand, consisted of GINA produced programs from which the Government again received their positive timings, and **Commentaries** presented on air by the Station's owner, from which the Government and the PPP/C's negative publicity, and the PNCR-1G's positive timings were derived.

## MTV CH 65

CATEGORY	GOVT (in minutes)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)									
			PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
NEWS UPDATE	1271.3	-13.2	46.2	-0.5	37.7	-11	35.4	-3.2	3.9	-1.9	0	-1.6
TALK SHOWS	347.5	-0.4	20.2	0	0.7	-14.2	0.2	0	0	0	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	626.3	-2.6	1.9	0	3	-1.3	1.9	-1.5	0.3	-0.3	0	0



### Observations/Analysis

For the above stated period, the newsteam of **News Update** newscast covered the Government and the Parliamentary Political Parties in the following way: the Government received tremendously more positive than negative coverage; the PPP/C was given the biggest amount of positive coverage, followed by the PNCR-1G, AFC, with GAP/ROAR in the cellar position. The PNCR-1G was awarded the pole position for negative coverage, followed sequentially by AFC, GAP/ROAR, TUF and PPP/C. The quantum of positive publicity that the Government derived from the newscast, swamped the pedestrian amount of negative coverage they were subjected to, suggesting that the newsteam was grossly partial in their treatment of governmental matters; a conclusion that is substantiated by the positive to negative ratio of coverage parceled out to the Government by the newsteam, for this reporting period, which stood at just over **96:1**. Amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties, the PPP/C obtained the highest total of positive coverage and an inconsequential amount of negative, which contrasted sharply with the coverage given to the PNCR-1G, whose negative coverage severely dented the positive publicity the party received on the newscast. Neither the AFC nor GAP/ROAR's negative coverage had any observable detrimental effect on the two (2) parties overall net positive showing. The figures adduced

from the newscast implied a pattern of news reportage over the current reporting period that was positively favourable to the Government and ruling party, but also charitable in the allocation of prime airtime to the main Parliamentary Opposition Political Parties.

The Channel's **Talk Shows** segment produced figures which showed that the Government amassed a plurality of positive coverage. For the political parties, the PPP/C was given the largest take of positive coverage, followed distantly by the PNCR-1G and AFC, in that order. The prominent features in this category of the station's programming were the Government's preponderance of positive publicity; the relative dominance of the PPP/C amongst the political parties' positive columns; and the disproportionately high level of negative publicity the main opposition PNCR-1G was subjected to. These observances, coming out from this section of the station's programming during the last quarter is an ongoing phenomenon that stems entirely from the exclusive buy-out of the segment's airtime by the ruling party (PPP/C) for the delivery of its (and the Government's propaganda) to the country's citizens. This being the case, the PNCR-1G's high negative ratings is not too difficult to fathom.

The Channel's **General Programs** consisted only of GINA produced programs, and the figures derived from these programs, as is expected, resulted in a high level of positive publicity and negligible negative coverage accruing to the Government. The coverage deducted by the Unit's monitoring team for the political parties were in most cases paltry, however, the PNCR-1G was sprinkled with the largest serving of positive coverage, while the PPP/C and GAPA/ROAR jointly occupied the second position, followed by GAP/ROAR. The AFC consumed the largest cut of negative coverage, followed in order by the PNCR-1G and GAP/ROAR. The PPP/C was not accorded any negative publicity. The quantum of coverage allocated to the Parliamentary Political Parties did not suggest any imbalance or bias, and the Government's huge positive showing was premised on the fact that GINA programs are basically conceptualized to portray a positive Government image.

## **Comment**

The program "**DJ Stress Comedy Collection #1**" hosted by Paul Bonar and aired on MTV CH. 65 on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2009, from 11:30 hrs, was cause for concern because of the unacceptable level of profanity communicated therefrom to the general public. The Unit counted at least **eight (8) occasions** during one of the comedy routines featured on the program in which the **F** word was inconsiderately and gratuitously used. The Unit after taking cognizance of the timing of the program (11:30 hrs) and the likely audience at that time of day, which in all likelihood would have included young children with impressionable minds, and an adult viewership whose morals would have been offended, admonished the Presenter of the program for the unedited dissemination of the material. He (the host) was also advised by the Unit of his social responsibility to TV viewers in the country, moreso, in view of the unmitigated influence that the media can exert on the society's values.

## **N.B.**

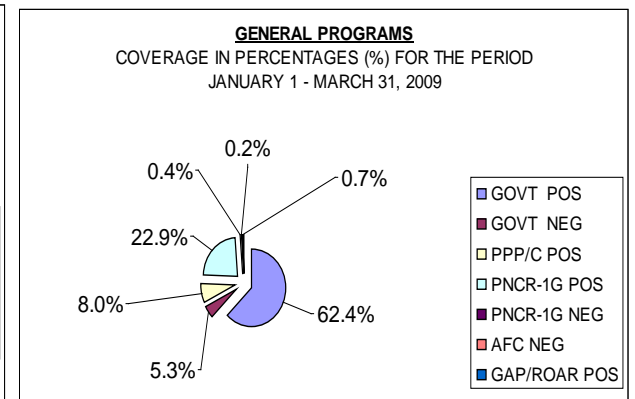
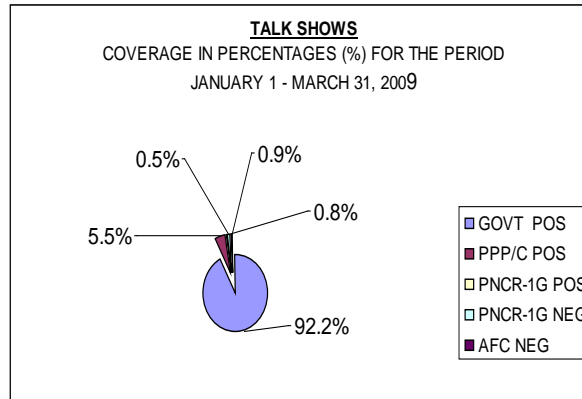
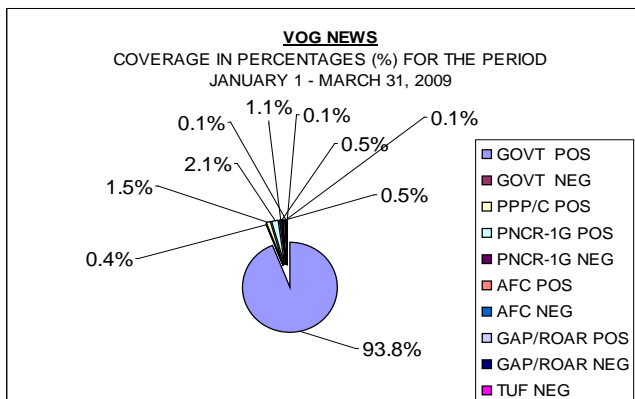
The letter sent by the Unit to MTV CH. 65 on the above matter, and the response received from the Station are included in the Appendices.



# RADIO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COVERAGE FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1-MARCH 31, 2009

## VOG

CATEGORY	GOVT (in minutes)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in minutes)									
			PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
VOG NEWS	497.2	1.9	7.9	-0.2	10.9	-5.8	2.5	-2.5	0.4	-0.5	0	-0.4
TALK SHOWS	186.7	0	11.2	0	1.1	-1.6	0.3	-1.9	0	0	0	0
GENERAL PROGRAMS	287.1	-24.4	36.9	-0.3	105.5	-2	0	-1.1	3.4	0	0	0



### Observations/Analysis

For the current reporting period, the output from the **VOG NEWS** program yielded results which showed that the government was allocated an almost impenetrable total of positive coverage when the barely noticeable negative publicity they (Government) received is taken into consideration. The apportioning of coverage to the Parliamentary Political Parties by the newsteam positioned the PNCR-1G to the top of the positive coverage list, followed in order by the PPP/C, AFC and GAP/ROAR. The PNCR-1G was also the most negatively portrayed political party, and was trailed in descending order by the AFC, GAP/ROAR, TUF and PPP/C. The AFC was accorded equal amounts of positive and negative airtime; GAP/ROAR and TUF acquired net negative coverage that was marginal; and the PPP/C garnered the best ratio of positive to negative coverage of over **39:1** after the differential between the PNCR-1G's good positive showing and the magnitude of

negative publicity the party attracted was taken onboard, which left the party with a positive to negative ratio of around **2:1**. The Government's contrived high positive timings from the newscast is explicable within the context that it is State-controlled radio; while the comparative coverage given by the newsteam to the political parties was to a large extent a fair reflection of their relative activity/ inactivity within parliament and the public sphere.

The Station's **Talk Shows** and **General Programs** revolved around programs produced by the Government News Agency, GINA, and as such, the Government's dominance of good (positive) coverage within these two categories is self explanatory. The share of coverage allocated to the Parliamentary Political Parties within the Talk Shows section of the station's programming left much to be desired, because of the lop-sided amount of positive coverage effusively poured on the PPP/C relative to the PNCR-1G and AFC (the other parties that received positive coverage). The PPP/C was allocated exactly **8** times the positive coverage of the PNCR-1G and the AFC combined. Surely, this smacks of partiality, and because it is State-Radio, the need for a regime of fairness and equity cannot be more emphasized. The major shortcoming of the GINA produced Talk Shows over the last quarter, was the dearth of opposing social and political views to that of the Government and ruling party, which made the programs one-dimensional.

Interestingly, the information coming out of the General Programs segment of the Channel's programming informed that the main Parliamentary Opposition Party - PNCR-1G – was more than adequately covered, and in a largely positive light, during the last quarter, evidenced by the figures reproduced in the table and General Programs Pie-Chart. This was surprising given the observed general construct of GINA produced programs from which the party's (PNC/R-1G) positive timings were taken. A review of the Unit's records covering the current reporting period revealed that the PNCR-1G's high level of positive publicity was generated from the edited 2009 Budget debates broadcast on VOG; a rather unusual development, which, nevertheless augurs well for broadcasting in the state sector. However, the fact that an equitable level of coverage wasn't afforded the other Parliamentary Opposition Political Parties, namely, AFC and GAP/ROAR is nonetheless a critical observation which the Station's management would do well to meaningfully interpret in the interest of the station's continued good public standing.

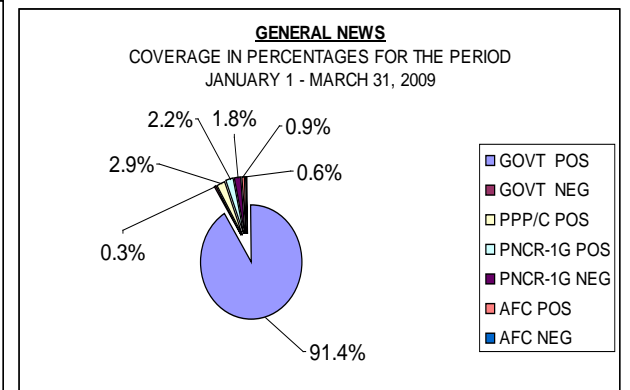
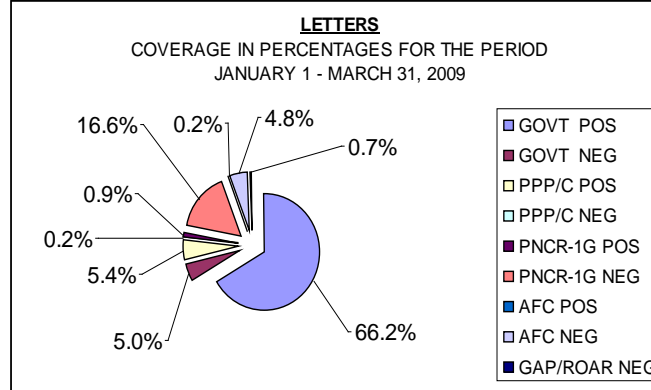
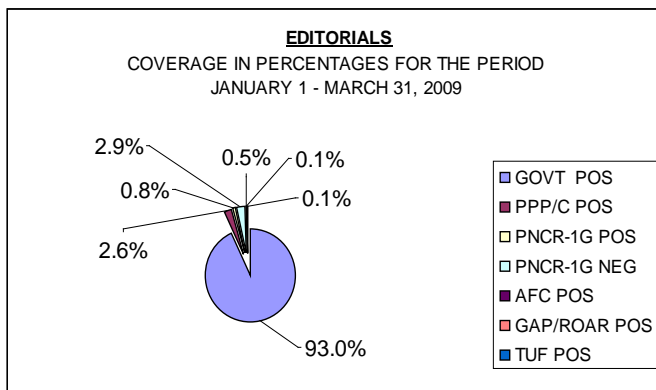
# NEWSPAPERS

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COVERAGE

### FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1-MARCH 31, 2009

#### GUYANA CHRONICLE

CATEGORY	GOVT (in column inches)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in column inches)									
	POS	NEG	PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
			POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
EDITORIALS	265.2	0	7.4	0	2.4	8.2	1.3	0	0.3	0	0.3	0
LETTERS	548.9	-41.1	45	-1.6	7.3	-137.9	1.8	-39.9	0	-5.5	0	0
GENERAL NEWS	8208.2	-26.3	258.7	-1	200.2	-159	83	-49.9	1.4	-3.5	0	0



### Observations/Analysis

From the sweep of information channeled through the Guyana Chronicle **Editorials** for the above stated period, the Government's tally of positive coverage was total in the sense that it was undiminished by any negative publicity. In like manner, amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties, the PPP/C gained the highest amount of positive coverage, which was untarnished by the presence of any trace of negative coverage. The PNCR-1G accumulated a disproportionate amount of negative publicity relative to the quantity of positive coverage the party was afforded; and AFC, GAP/ROAR and TUF received net positive coverage, that were relatively minuscule. Of note is that the PNCR-1G was the only political party that attracted significant net negative publicity (over **3:1**), while the PPP/C gained the highest net positive coverage from the newspaper's editorial writers. The striking and patently inescapable feature of the Chronicle's editorials, over the past quarter, was the seeming shut-out of positive

information relating to the Parliamentary Opposition Parties, as against the treatment given by the newspaper's editorial writers to the ruling political party (PPP/C). Likewise, of critical interest, was the monopoly of positive publicity achieved by the Government, and the lack of any negative coverage penned against them. These two (2) features of the editorials, more than any other, highlighted the absolute subjection of this section of the newspaper to the influence of the Government and ruling party.

The **Letters** column of the newspaper unveiled figures for the current reporting period which showed that the Government attracted over **13** times more positive than negative coverage from letters to the Editor. The PPP/C secured **28** times more positive than negative publicity for the political parties, while the PNCR-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR were the recipients of high levels of net negative coverage. The PNCR-1G and AFC's positive coverage were dwarfed by the preponderance of negative coverage each party was subjected to, while GAP/ROAR did not accumulate any positive coverage. The PNCR-1G's ratio of negative to positive coverage was approximately **19:1** and the AFC's ratio was **22:1**. Amongst the political parties, the stark contrast in coverage between the ruling party and the three (3) opposition political parties that were covered - PNCR-1G, AFC, and GAP/ROAR – was indicative of the selected publication in the newspaper of a raft of letters that consistently exhibited two common traits: highly critical of the parliamentary opposition parties, except GAP/ROAR and TUF; and effusive in praise of the PPP/C, and the Government. However, going against the grain of the choreographed missives that adorned this section of the newspaper, was the appreciable latitude given by the Editor to writers wishing to level criticisms at the Government through the medium, reflected by the expansive numerical summation in the Government's negative column in the matrix – a rather significant and encouraging development that spawned the first quarter of the new year.

The **General News** section of the newspaper produced figures that showed the Government received tremendously more positive than negative coverage, while three (3) of the four (4) Parliamentary Political Parties that were covered received net positive coverage. GAP/ROAR was the only political party that suffered net negative coverage of a not too wide differential. The PPP/C commanded the largest share of positive coverage in this section of the newspaper, followed in order by the PNCR-1G, AFC, and GAP/ROAR. In reverse, the PNCR-1G was given the largest amount of negative publicity followed in order by AFC, then GAP/ROAR, with the PPP/C receiving the least amount. The Government and the PPP/C's appropriation of positive publicity were self-generated from the range of GINA produced news and information pieces that constituted the greater portion of this section's output. The high levels of negative publicity that besmirched the PNCR-1G and AFC's public images were also inflicted from GINA's repository, but more severely from the deluge of daily vituperations gratuitously lavished on the two parties by the newspaper's Columnists. Moreover, the relative sprinkling of negative coverage given to the Government was more by default than a truly honest attempt at providing balanced news coverage. The evidence gleaned from the first quarter of the year, so far, is enough justification to lament the lack of balance and equity that typified the dissemination of news and information through this section of the newspaper.

## **Comment**

The Guyana Chronicle Newspaper published a Letter to the Editor in its Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, edition, written by T. King and captioned **“Cannot wait for this parasitic political party to go away”** in which a potentially disruptive mix of spurious political allegations, and implicit racial profiling were observed. In the letter, T. King stated the following without providing any substantiating evidence:

**“It [PNCR] tried to carry out its threats with brutal prison escapees of the now deceased five they hailed as heroes and freedom fighters.**

**PNCR remained silent and on the sidelines when their freedom fighters were mercilessly killing innocent women/children, police officers and business people all across the land.**

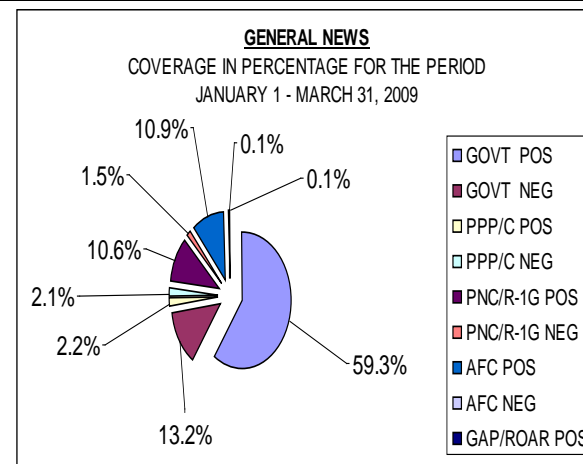
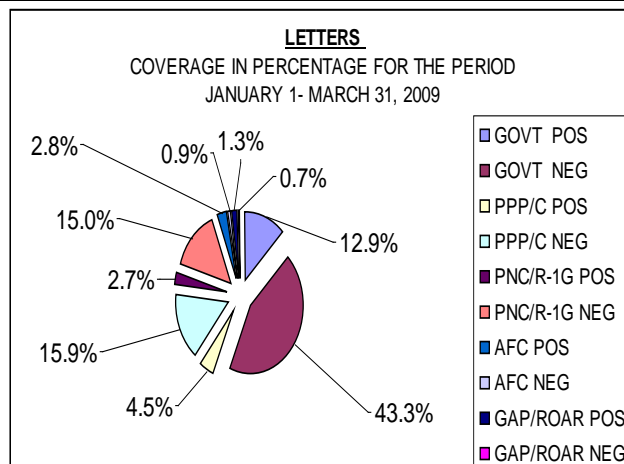
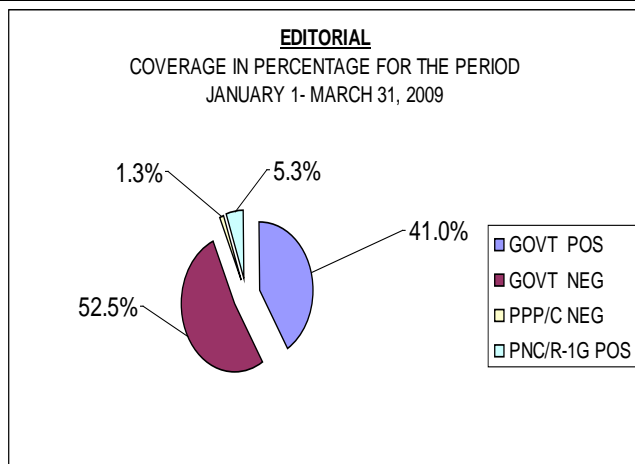
**They killed a government minister and his relatives in cold blood.....With that not working they then tried to inject race hate by slaughtering East Indian men, women and children at Lusignan”.**

The Editor of the Chronicle newspaper was chided by the Unit for the publication of the above portion of Mr. /Ms King’s letter, which was purposely scurrilous; intended to score cheap political points; and pregnant with negative racial overtones. The Unit pointed out the social and political implications of the dissemination of such unfounded rhetoric on the body politic of the nation, and advised the Editor to be more discerning in future regarding the selection of information to be communicated to the general public.

**N.B.**

The Editor of the Guyana Chronicle Newspaper was written to by the Unit on the above issue. (See letter in Appendices)

CATEGORY	POLITICAL PARTIES (in column inches)											
	GOVT (in column inches)		PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
EDITORIALS	64.7	-82.8	0	-2	8.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LETTERS	147.4	-497.1	51.5	-182.9	31.1	-171.5	32.4	-10.6	14.8	-7.6	0	0
GENERAL NEWS	4940.1	-1097.7	183.6	-173.3	885.8	-125	910	-7.6	6.4	0	0	0



**Observations/Analysis**

Over the last quarter, Kaieteur News **Editorials** projected the Government more negative than positive. And the coverage extended to the Parliamentary Political Parties was limited to the PPP/C and PNCR-1G. The PPP/C received only negative coverage (of a marginal amount), while the PNCR-1G was assigned a moderate quantity of positive column inches. The figures for the political parties showed minimal, or in most instances, complete absence of any coverage (positive or negative) for the Parliamentary Political Parties, and this occurrence was premised on the fact that over the last quarter, the majority of published Editorials focused on general issues, as distinct from political issues, hence the scarcity of meaningful coverage for the political parties reflected in the released figures.

From the **Letter to the Editor** section, the display of figures showed that the Government received quantitatively more negative than positive coverage from the published letters that appeared in the newspaper over the last quarter. The Government was actually dispensed with approximately **3** times more negative than positive coverage. The spread of coverage amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties showed that the PPP/C achieved

the largest amount of positive coverage, followed by the AFC, PNCR-1G, and GAP/ROAR in that order. The PPP/C also attracted the highest amount of negative coverage, followed in sequential order by the PNCR-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR. The PPP/C's ratio of negative to positive coverage was over **3:1**, and the PNCR-1G's over **5:1**. The AFC's positive to negative ratio was exactly **3:1**, and GAP/ROAR's approximately **2:1**. The hugely disproportional amounts of negative publicity heaped on the Government and the two (2) main Parliamentary Political Parties – PPP/C and PNCR-1G – by contributors to the Letters column, which were published without favor, is an infallible summary of an editorial policy that was devoid of any perceptible pandering to partisan interests.

The **General News** section of the newspaper, delivered to readers, coverage of Government that was extensively more positive than negative, resulting in the Government acquiring over **4** times more positive than negative coverage. Amongst the political parties, the AFC anchored the top position for positive coverage, followed by the PNCR-1G, PPP/C and GAP/ROAR. The PPP/C consumed the largest share of negative publicity, and was trailed in descending order by the PNCR-1G, and AFC. GAP/ROAR did not attract any negative coverage. The PPP/C's positive coverage was almost balanced out by the quantum of negative coverage the party absorbed; the PNCR-1G grossed **7** times more positive than negative coverage; and the AFC's positive to negative ratio was approximately **120:1**. The Government and all the political parties that were covered accumulated net positive coverage. However, it is indisputable, that the AFC achieved an inordinate amount of positive publicity, relative to the bigger Parliamentary Political Parties – PPP/C and PNCR-1G – and this was due mainly to the fact that it is the only Parliamentary Political Party that authors a weekly Column in the Kaieteur News newspaper.

## Comment

On Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2009, a letter published in the Kaieteur News newspaper, written by Eric Phillips, captioned “**Nothing new in Mc Dougall's report that has not been stated before**” gave cause for concern because of its implications for race-relations in the country. In the letter the writer alleged that President Bharrat Jagdeo had made the following remarks at Babu John [during the 2006 General and Regional Elections]:

**“She would have read President Jagdeo's unapologetic and racist comments at Babu John, messages and especially the one which he stated that a PNC win would result in African criminals being given guns to murder Indians.”**

The taped record of the statement made by the President (taken from the MMU archives) confirmed that his actual words were in fact:

**“Today the criminals have to steal guns; if the PNC were to get into office they would give them the guns...”**

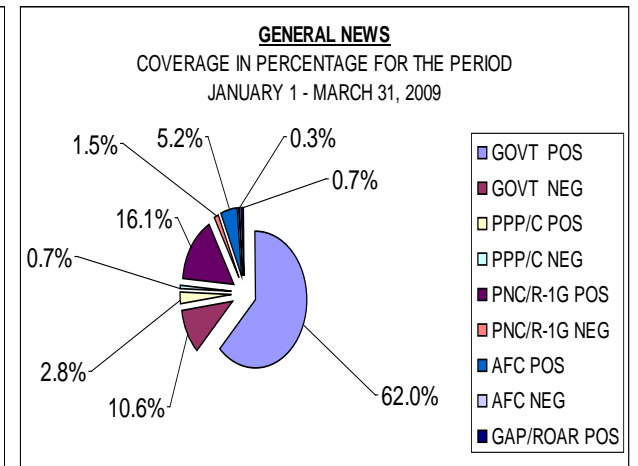
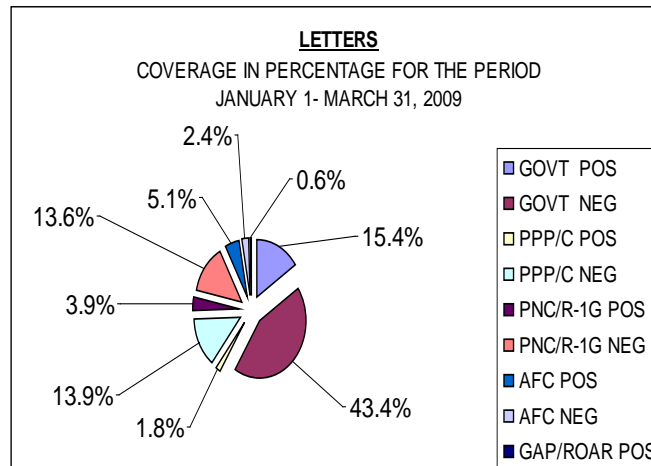
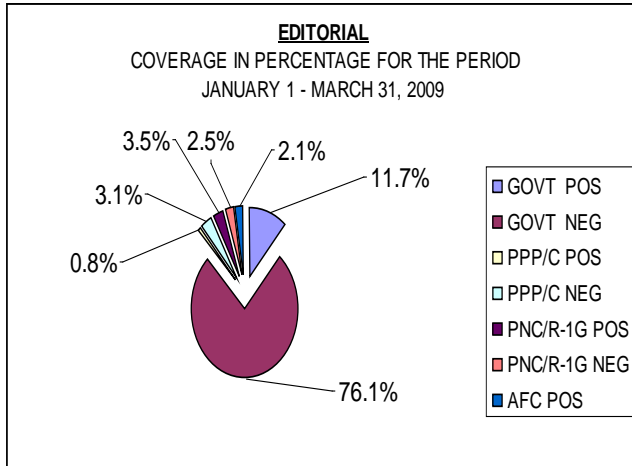
In light of the above evidence, the Editor of the Kaieteur News newspaper was accordingly advised by the Unit to be more pro-active in exercising editorial censure on information of the genre contained in Mr. Phillips' letter, which was willfully inaccurate and pointedly racist in its construct and intent.

## N.B.

The Editor of the Kaieteur News newspaper was written to by the Unit in relation to our observance. (See letter in Appendices)

# STABROEK NEWS

CATEGORY	GOVT (in column inches)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in column inches)									
			PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF	
	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG
EDITORIALS	34.8	-226	2.5	-9.3	10.5	-7.5	6.3	0	0.5	0	0	0
LETTERS	115.9	-326.1	13.7	-104.2	29.3	-102	38.1	-17.8	4.5	0	0	0
GENERAL NEWS	3583.3	-611.1	162.7	-43.3	928.9	-85.1	302.6	-18.2	40.3	0	0.4	0



## Observations/Analysis

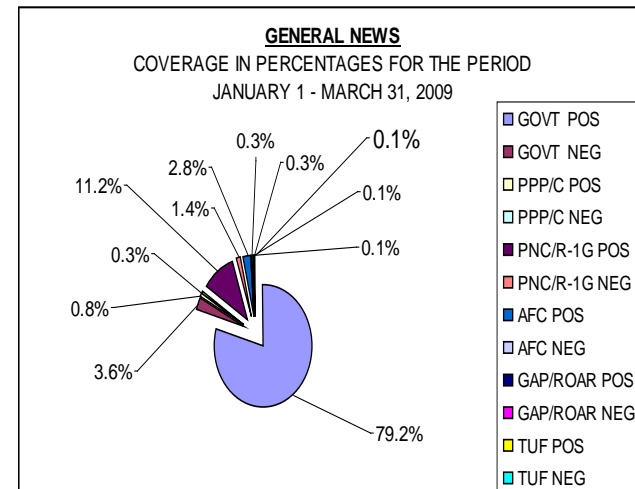
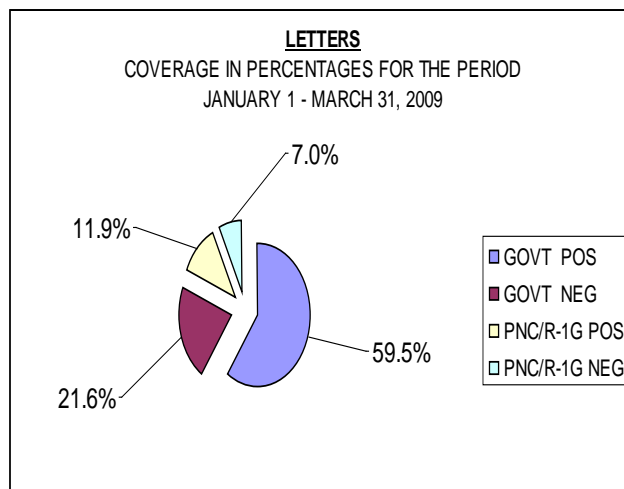
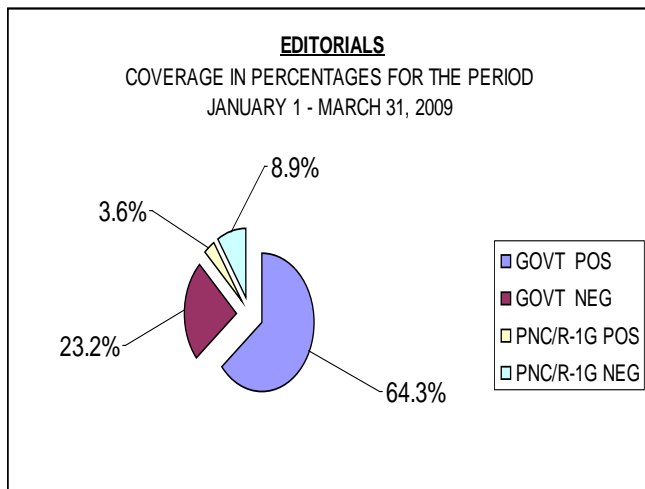
The Stabroek News **Editorials** for the current reporting period produced coverage for the Government that was disproportionately tilted on the negative side. As a matter of fact, the ratio of negative to positive coverage given to the Government by the newspaper's editorial writers was more than **6:1**. Amongst the political parties, the PNCR-1G, AFC and GAP/ROAR were covered more positively than negatively, while the PPP/C suffered from the distribution of more negative than positive coverage. Overall, the PNCR-1G topped the political parties for positive coverage, while the PPP/C acquired the highest amount of negative publicity. The Government's bequeath of negative coverage, and to a lesser degree the PPP/C's, stood out obtrusively because of their similarity. And, this is so because both of two (2) reasons: (1) The Government, and the PPP/C, bore the brunt of the sustained criticisms chorused by the newspaper's editorial writers which were aimed specifically at the Government's performance over the last quarter; and (2) The trenchant ripostes to the Government's positions on issues, that were a regular feature of this section's output. The PNCR-1G was also exposed to a considerable level of negative publicity in the editorials, however, the most observable feature of the newspaper's editorial contents over the last quarter, was the passionate obsession of the editorial writers with taking on the Government on all fronts.



In the newspaper's **Letters** section the Government collected largely more negative than positive coverage. The negative coverage measured for the Government from the contents of the letters published over the past three (3) months was nearly **3** times the positive coverage they (Government) received. Amongst the Parliamentary Political Parties, both the PPP/C and PNCR-1G suffered the same fate from the pens of the letter writers – that is, quantitatively more negative than positive comments. The AFC and GAP/ROAR, on the other hand, accumulated net positive coverage. The AFC garnered the largest amount of positive coverage for the political parties, followed by the PNCR-1G, PPP/C and GAP/ROAR, in that order. The PPP/C was painted with the most negative publicity, closely trailed by the PNCR-1G, with AFC attracting the least. The PPP/C was doused with over **7** times more negative than positive coverage; the PNCR-1G was accredited with a **3:1** ratio of negative to positive coverage; and the AFC's positive to negative coverage was approximately **2:1**. The distribution of coverage within the letters column did not indicate any untoward bias or editorial manipulation to bring about a particular outcome either for the Government or the Parliamentary Political Parties. The fact that the Government and the main Parliamentary Political Parties – PPP/C and PNCR-1G – all accrued net negative publicity of varying levels, suggests an editorial policy of “letting the chips fall where they may.”

In the **General News** category, the Government tallied nearly **6** times more positive than negative coverage. The flow of coverage to the political parties resulted in the PNCR-1G distancing the others with the highest quantity of positive coverage, followed by the AFC, PPP/C, GAP/ROAR, and lastly TUF. The PNCR-1G also achieved the largest share of negative coverage, followed sequentially by the PPP/C and AFC. The PNCR-1G was projected in the newspaper's General News approximately **11** times more positive than negative; the PPP/C **4** times more positive than negative; the AFC just over **16** times; while GAP/ROAR and TUF's positive coverage were uncontested. Both the Government and all five (5) Parliamentary Political Parties managed to accumulate net positive coverage within this section of the newspaper, while each entity, apart from GAP/ROAR and TUF, absorbed varying degrees of negative publicity which did not have much effect on the overall good impressions of each organization conveyed to readers through the section.

CATEGORY	GOVT (in column inches)		POLITICAL PARTIES (in column inches)										
	POS	NEG	PPP/C		PNCR-1G		AFC		GAP/ROAR		TUF		
			POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	POS	NEG	
EDITORIALS	18	-6.5	0	0	1	-2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LETTERS	13.5	-4.9	0	0	2.7	-1.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GENERAL NEWS	5027	-226.8	50	-19.1	708.4	-86	175.6	-17.7	3.9	-6.7	20.2	-3.5	



**Observations/Analysis**

For the period in review the Guyana Times **Editorials** allocated measurable coverage only to the Government, and one (1) Parliamentary Political Party – PNCR-1G. The Government received nearly **3** times more positive than negative coverage, while the PNCR-1G was covered slightly more negative than positive. The figures from the editorials did not render a pattern of coverage from which an objective analysis could have been derived. This is because the topics discussed within the editorials over the past three (3) months were in the main, esoteric, and unrelated to local issues.

The newspaper’s **Letters** column is still in its formative stages, and over the last quarter, the Government recorded nearly **3** times more positive than negative coverage from the contributions of letter writers, while the PNCR-1G was the only Parliamentary Political Party that acquired measurable coverage, attracting just a little more positive than negative coverage. Again, like the editorials, the figures from this section do not lend themselves to critical analysis.

The contents of the **General News** section of the newspaper, yielded coverage to the Government and the Parliamentary Political Parties as follows: the Government received sizably more positive than negative coverage, with a positive to negative ratio of approximately **22:1**. **The** PNCR-1G accumulated the highest amount of positive coverage amongst the political parties, followed by the AFC, PPP/C, TUF, and GAP/ROAR. The PNCR-1G also captured the most negative publicity, followed in descending order by the PPP/C, AFC, GAP/ROAR, and lastly, TUF. When the positive to negative ratio the parties received was taken into account, the AFC's ratio of approximately **10:1** leads amongst the political parties, outscoring the PNCR-1G (at **8:1**), TUF (nearly **6:1**), and PPP/C (over **2:1**). GAP/ROAR was the only party that tallied net negative coverage. Outside of the coverage GAP/ROAR sustained, the coverage allocated to the Government and the Parliamentary Political Parties was consistently net positive throughout in varying degrees, typifying a commendably fair and balanced approach to the dissemination of news from this section of the newspaper, to the general public.

## Conclusion

The MMU's analysis of the local media's performance over the course of the last three (3) months turned up some instructive observations, which formed the basis of our conclusions for the current reporting period.

Starting with the broadcast media, more specifically Television, there was **one (1)** notable occurrence of a digression into "gutter journalism" perpetrated by an untutored exponent of the journalistic craft, which could have been avoided if the offending program host possessed a scintilla of knowledge of what professional media standards entailed. The incident being referred to, in which an unedited, profanity-laced, so-called entertainment program on **MTV Ch. 65** was thoughtlessly filtered through the "Tube" into the homes of unsuspecting television viewers, assaulting the morals of the society in the process, wasn't an isolated case, or an aberration; it was the crystallization of what has become trendy in local journalism – the dissemination of unedited vulgarities on national TV. A perusal of our (MMU) records signified that six (6) such incidents were identified within the TV medium during 2008, which convinces us that it is a new fad in daytime TV that has taken root. It goes without saying that the integrity of the profession is at stake from the misguided and pernicious behavior of a few miscreants, but thankfully, it can be salvaged from its dire predicament, through stronger self-regulation, and stronger editorial controls.

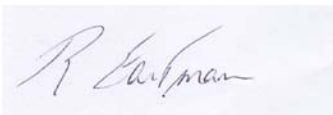
Separate and apart from the above observation, the Unit's general analysis of the performance of the broadcast sector for the first quarter of the year, led to the ineluctable conclusion that most of the TV Channels were true to form in their presentation of news and information to viewers of national TV. The selection and presentation of news items on the newscasts of the private TV stations, specifically **Channels 09 (Prime News), 28 (Evening News), and 65 (News Update)**, seemed to be influenced more by ingrained loyalties to the aligned political forces in the country, than by objective news reporting, and presented an interesting study of how facts can be embellished to communicate impressions that snugly fit into the pre-set templates of politically-driven editorial perspectives. It should be noted though, that the private media has a democratic right to propagate the views of their preferred political choices, but it raises well-founded public concerns when professionalism is compromised for expediency; and as a means to a political end. It was nevertheless, encouraging to observe that this type of retrogressive behaviour was limited to only the aforementioned newscasts, while others such as **Capitol News (Ch 07) and News Watch (Ch 06)**, exemplified the salient characteristics of professional news reporting. We (the Unit) have already critique the performance of State Television (Ch 11) for the current reporting period (pg. 11). However, just to reinforce the observations already made, we would like to recommend to management that they should see the Channel as a national resource to be used in the collective interest of all the citizens of the country, and with this ideal uppermost in mind, they should work assiduously towards the achievement and maintenance of an acceptable level of equity between the Government's views and the variant opinions reflective of opposing social and political forces in the country. It is not a call for parity, but for enhanced variety in the News, Talk Shows, and General Programs offered to the general public by the station.

The performance of the print media for this reporting period was variable. The detection of **two (2)** infringements of the MCC, found in the Letters to the Editor sections of two (2) of the daily newspapers – **Guyana Chronicle** and **Kaieteur News** – relating to the publishing of information that was inaccurate, unsubstantiated, and racist, besmirched the rudimentary principles that have from time immemorial guided the practices niche in responsible journalism. The etiology of these infringements resides in the feckless and downright cavalier approach to the important duties of editorship displayed by the holders of these positions within the print media. It would have been excusable if the latitude given to the prominent racists in our midst, to vent their despicable rhetoric to a national audience, could have been logically pinned down to incompetence, but the consistency in the publications of these racially divisive missives in the letters pages of our national

newspapers, traces an emerging pattern, that from the available evidence, is being nurtured through the complicity and connivance of editors, who have little or no concern for the overriding imperative of the national good. The ongoing situation has justifiably raised “red flags” which, if misinterpreted, and left to fester, would be to our own peril.

There was also another stricture that hobbled the forward movement of the print media for the current reporting period, which did not go undetected by the Unit’s microscope. This has to do with a nascent trend that has been around for sometime, which has now begun to have a debilitating effect on the growth and development of the local print media. It is the jettisoning of all pretence at neutrality by the editorials of the Guyana Chronicle and Stabroek News. The odds are better in finding the proverbial needle in a haystack, than to detect an iota of criticism of the Government in any of the Chronicle’s daily and Sunday editorials. On the other hand, the majority of Stabroek News’ editorials can aptly be described as sharpened barbs aimed at the Government’s jugular. The diametrical positions adopted by the editorial writers from the two (2) camps, have clearly defined the two (2) newspapers editorial directions; and has also subtly signaled the abrogation of constructive opinion-writing, in preference for saber-rattling expositions by the newspapers editorial contributors.

Finally, the unearthing of **three (3)** instances of unacceptable media conduct in just the first three (3) months of this new year, is a disquieting reminder that the potential to disrupt the normalcy of the country’s social life lies within the purview of the media fraternity to exercise at will, because of the absence of a well-structured, legally binding, regulatory framework to explicitly guide the behavior of local media practitioners. In the absence of definitive legislative articles that clearly articulate the do’s and don’ts of media behavior, backed by sanctions to enforce compliance, the local media environment will remain conducive to the kindling of the worst types of journalism. This may come over as overly harsh, but it is an inconvenient truth that cannot easily be glossed over or arrantly dismissed as overblown; rather, it is a situation that necessitates peremptory attention from the powers-that-be. The 2006 **Media Code of Conduct** that the MMU utilizes in its evaluation of local media performance, and as a yardstick for identifying media infractions, is basically a gentleman’s modus vivendi, the effectiveness of which is based on moral suasion and the media fraternity’s cooperation. As it stands, the Code lacks the coercive powers of legislation; the need of which cannot be more emphasized at this point and time.



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