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American journalism is collapsing before our eyes

By [Michael Goodwin](#) August 21, 2016 | 5:40am



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump talks to reporters during the 2016 campaign. Photo: Getty Images

Donald Trump may or may not fix his campaign, and Hillary Clinton may or may not become the first female president. But something else happening before our eyes is almost as important: the complete collapse of American journalism as we know it.

The frenzy to bury Trump is not limited to the Clinton campaign and the Obama White House. They are working hand in hand with what was considered the cream of the nation's news organizations.

The shameful display of naked partisanship by the elite media is unlike anything seen in modern America.

The largest broadcast networks — CBS, NBC and ABC — and major newspapers like the New York Times and Washington Post have jettisoned all pretense of fair play. Their fierce determination to keep Trump out of the Oval Office has no precedent.

Indeed, no foreign enemy, no terror group, no native criminal gang suffers the daily beating that Trump does. The mad mullahs of Iran, who call America the Great Satan and vow to wipe Israel off the map, are treated gently by comparison.

By torching its remaining credibility in service of Clinton, the mainstream media's reputations will likely never recover, nor will the standards. No future producer, editor, reporter or anchor can be expected to meet a test of fairness when that standard has been trashed in such willful and blatant fashion.

Liberal bias in journalism is often baked into the cake. The traditional ethos of comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable leads to demands that government solve every problem. Favoring big government, then, becomes routine among most journalists, especially young ones.

I know because I was one of them. I started at the Times while the Vietnam War and civil rights movement raged, and was full of certainty about right and wrong.

My editors were, too, though in a different way. Our boss of bosses, the legendary Abe Rosenthal, knew his reporters leaned left, so he leaned right to "keep the paper straight."

That meant the Times, except for the opinion pages, was scrubbed free of reporters' political views, an edict that was enforced by giving the opinion and news operations separate editors.

The church-and-state structure was one reason the Times was considered the flagship of journalism.

Those days are gone. The Times now is so out of the closet as a Clinton shill that it is giving itself permission to violate any semblance of evenhandedness in its news pages as well as its opinion pages.

A recent article by its media reporter, Jim Rutenberg, whom I know and like, began this way: “If you’re a working journalist and you believe that Donald J. Trump is a demagogue playing to the nation’s worst racist and nationalistic tendencies, that he cozies up to anti-American dictators and that he would be dangerous with control of the United States nuclear codes, how the heck are you supposed to cover him?”

Whoa, Nellie. The clear assumption is that many reporters see Trump that way, and it is noteworthy that no similar question is raised about Clinton, whose scandals are deserving only of “scrutiny.” Rutenberg approvingly cites a leftist journalist who calls one candidate “normal” and the other “abnormal.”

Clinton is hardly “normal” to the 68 percent of Americans who find her dishonest and untrustworthy, though apparently not a single one of those people writes for the Times. Statistically, that makes the Times “abnormal.”

Also, you don’t need to be a detective to hear echoes in that first paragraph of Clinton speeches and ads, including those featured prominently on the Times’ website. In effect, the paper has seamlessly adopted Clinton’s view as its own, then tries to justify its coverage.

It’s an impossible task, and Rutenberg fails because he must. Any reporter who agrees with Clinton about Trump has no business covering either candidate.

It’s pure bias, which the Times fancies itself an expert in detecting in others, but is blissfully tolerant of in itself. And with the top political editor quoted in the story as approving the one-sided coverage as necessary and deserving, the prejudice is now official policy.

It’s a historic mistake and a complete break with the paper’s own traditions. Instead of dropping its standards, the Times should bend over backwards to enforce them, even while acknowledging that Trump is a rare breed. That’s the whole point of standards — they are designed to guide decisions not just in easy cases, but in all cases, to preserve trust.

The Times, of course, is not alone in becoming unhinged over Trump, but that's also the point. It used to be unique because of its adherence to fairness.

Now its only standard is a double standard, one that it proudly confesses. Shame would be more appropriate.

You can't subsidize freedom

A Cato Institute study finds that New York is the least free of the 50 states because of its high tax burden, huge debt and regulatory stranglehold. Another factor is business subsidies, which are almost four times the national average.

At first blush, that one might sound like a good thing. Don't we want businesses to create jobs, and shouldn't the state help by subsidizing employers?

Yes, and no. A current housing example proves the point.

A program called 421-a provided a property tax break to developers in exchange for lower rents on some apartments. It lapsed last January, and a bid to revive it has the state adding another layer of incentives.

The measure reportedly proposes that laborers get at least \$50 an hour in wages and benefits, with the state paying 30 percent of it in less ritzy parts of the city.

Here's the catch: Where does the state subsidy money come from? Other taxpayers — that's where.

With the state already projecting a budget deficit, other tax hikes might follow, which would make living here even less affordable.

In essence, then, the state and city already have such high taxes that, to get affordable housing, they must take money from other people to subsidize both developers and workers.

What does any of this have to do with free markets and capitalism? Nothing. Which is why Cato is exactly right that New York has a freedom deficit.

Clinton and Bratton's political play

Police Commissioner Bill Bratton emerged from a meeting with Hillary Clinton gushing about her "ideas" and "experience," as dutifully noted by numerous news organizations. But most failed to note that Bratton is leaving the NYPD for a job with Teneo, a corporate cousin of Clinton Inc.

It's probably also just a coincidence that Bratton is cozy with the candidate whom his current boss, the mayor, has endorsed.

Imagine the howling if a police commissioner showered praise on someone the mayor opposed.

Good reasons why active law enforcement should butt out of politics.

Tokin' gesture

Headline: "Obama rips daughter Malia for smoking pot"

So even the president is subject to the parent trap: Do as I say, not as I did.

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