

THE FREE PRESS?

A MONTHLY JOURNAL AND TEACHING TOOL EXPOSING PROPAGANDA IN THE MASS MEDIA

A news resource which is **not:**

Owned by **billionaires**
Beholden to **advertisers**
Staffed by **sycophants**

Unlike other journals we **declare our interests:**

No **profit motive**
No **cronyism**
A challenge to the **propaganda model** of the mainstream media

What is the propaganda model?

The vast majority of “headline news” providers in the UK are profit-driven corporations, affiliated to even larger corporations, who make most of their money from selling advertising space to other businesses.

The propaganda model predicts that such media will generate a view of the world that is overwhelmingly favourable to the interests of big business and marginalises, ignores or attacks opposing views.

A wealth of evidence supports the model. Head to www.the-free-press.co.uk for an overview.

Wondering why you’ve never heard of the propaganda model?

Perhaps you’ve been getting your news from...the news.



Was Brexit the defining issue of the 2019 General Election or did prolonged media attacks on Jeremy Corbyn render him unelectable?

AND THE WINNER OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTION IS...THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Jeremy Corbyn has spent decades serving his parliamentary constituency and campaigning on issues like gay rights, anti-racism, anti-Apartheid and against acts of war such as the UK-US invasion of Iraq.

How this man came to be viewed as a “threat to national security”¹ and “an existential threat to Jewish life”² is a remarkable demonstration of the mainstream media’s ability to distort reality.

The website theyworkforyou.com tracks politicians’ voting records. Their analysis of Corbyn’s voting pattern highlights that he “consistently voted against the Iraq war” and also rejected the party whip to vote “against requiring the mass retention of information about communications” and “for a transparent Parliament”³.

Likewise, Corbyn stood in the minority during the austerity era by continuously opposing welfare cuts and reduced taxation for business and the wealthy.

It is worth reflecting on this (fact-based) picture of the Labour leader: a politician in the minority because he favoured a transparent parliament, opposed mass surveillance of the country’s citizens and prioritised the interests of those at bottom of the economic ladder over those at the top.

A man not, in short, likely to be favoured by the business/billionaire-owned press.

Press attacks on Corbyn duly began in the aftermath of his surprise win in the Labour leadership election of 2015. Initially, they focussed on the “danger” posed by his pacifism.

“Corbyn’s ISIS Past Revealed”, “Corbyn: Abolish the Army” and “Jezza’s Jihadi Comrades”⁴ were three of the more outlandish tabloid headlines.

The broadsheets showed only a little more restraint. A report by the London School of Economics, based on statistical analysis of newspaper coverage from September to November 2015, found that UK journalism played an “attackdog” role when it came to Corbyn, “systematically vilifying the leader of the biggest opposition party, assassinating his character, ridiculing his personality and delegitimising his ideas and politics”⁵.

Despite this, Corbyn performed well in the 2016 General Election. Labour’s share of the vote rose by 9.6% - the largest vote share increase at a single election since 1945⁶.

Perhaps the press would now accept Corbyn as a credible political figure putting forth an alternative policy agenda to Tory austerity?

This is not what the propaganda model would predict.

Rather, the campaign against Corbyn intensified and discovered a new hook upon which to hang itself: anti-Semitism in the Labour party.

(Article continues over page...)

(...main article continued)

A study by Greg Philo and Mike Berry of the Glasgow Media Group exposed the incredible discrepancy between the number of members of the Labour party investigated for making anti-Semitic comments (0.1%) and public perception of the problem (that 34% of Labour members had been reported for anti-Semitism).

Philo and Berry reported that from “15 June 2015 to 31 March 2019 (there were) 5497 stories on the subject of Corbyn, anti-Semitism and the Labour Party”⁷ in the mainstream press.

This avalanche of coverage was not only out of proportion to the problem but contained serious errors. Mediareform.org examined a sample of the articles on Labour and anti-Semitism and found that 95 out of 250 contained “misleading or inaccurate reporting”. This included “29 examples of false statements or claims...six of them on BBC television news programmes”⁸.

The BBC, bound by law to impartial political coverage, followed the lead of the corporate media. Their hour-long Panorama special on anti-Semitism in the Labour Party was presented by John Ware, a journalist so qualified in impartiality he’d previously written an article describing Jeremy Corbyn as a man “whose entire political career has been stimulated by disdain for the West, appeasement of extremism, and who would barely understand what fighting for the revival of British values is really all about”⁹

There was no equivalent hour-long investigation into Islamophobia in the Conservative Party – a far bigger issue in terms of the raw data (a YouGov survey commissioned by Channel 4 found that 56% of Conservative Party members felt that Islam was a threat to “the British way of life.”¹⁰) and direct derogatory comments made by party leaders (Boris Johnston comparing Muslim women wearing burkas to letter boxes¹¹).

The 2019 election may or may not have been about Brexit, as most media commentators claim, but by amplifying and exaggerating anti-Semitism in Labour (while virtually ignoring “balance” issues like Islamophobia in the Conservative party) the media undoubtedly damaged Jeremy Corbyn’s attempts to present an alternative platform to voters.

Instead Boris Johnston, a man educated at Eton and a long-time member of the corporate media courtesy of his work at the Spectator, continues to present a business-friendly agenda to parliament.

Readers can judge for themselves whether, in this case, the media promoted or impaired the democratic process

How does the propaganda model work in practice?

Critics of the propaganda model claim that it is a “conspiracy theory.”

This, perhaps purposefully, misses the point of the propaganda model.

A conspiracy will not happen of its own accord. People must gather in rooms and have meetings to instigate a conspiracy.

The beauty of modern media propaganda is that it simply follows from the institutional structure of large media companies.

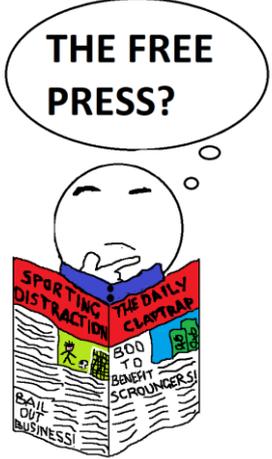
Consider someone at the bottom of this structure: a young journalist at Rupert Murdoch’s Sun newspaper: **Will this journalist have to be told, in a conspiratorial manner, not to pursue stories about unrest in the News International boardroom and corporate malpractice by one of the paper’s leading advertisers?**

Not likely. Do you try to earn job security by going against the values of the institution that employs you?

Of course, like us, journalists are unlikely to reflect on the institutional parameters that confine them. Far easier to subconsciously adopt these values and believe that you believe them.

If 90-95% of mainstream journalism positions are filled by people who share the same framework of values, know which stories to pursue and which to ignore, what can be said and can’t be said, that makes for a robust propaganda system.

You will, of course, have a hard time convincing journalists that this is what they’re doing. Then again, as Upton Sinclair famously said: →



“It’s difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon him not understanding it.”

**“Whoever controls the media, controls the mind”
Jim Morrison**

HOMEWORK!

Intrigued by the propaganda model? Have a go at undertaking your own critical analysis of the media.

Task: Google a well-known journalist of your choosing:

- Where did they go to school and university?
- Where did they work prior to their current job?
- Do friends, family, partners work in other “Establishment” roles – high up in business, the media or politics?

What did you discover? Did anything in the journalist’s education, previous work or personal connections within the Establishment lead you to doubt whether they could truly be “objective” and “tell truth to power” as journalists like to claim?

E-mail us at thefreepress@yahoo.com to let us know what you found or visit the website to look at some model answers. Andrew Marr, we’re looking at you!

* Visit www.the-free-press.co.uk here for a list of sources used, an extended version of the main article and more information on the media and propaganda

