

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 **the elite**

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

No **profit motive**
No **cronyism**
An interest in exposing **media bias** by applying the **propaganda model!**

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.



How did she shock them? With actual journalism...

EMILY MAITLIS SHOCKS JOURNALISM WORLD

“The language around Covid-19 has sometimes felt trite and misleading. You do not survive the illness through fortitude or strength of character, whatever the Prime Minister’s colleagues will tell us.”

So said Newsnight’s Emily Maitlis in an opening monologue¹ that went viral and saw the presenter praised for her “frank takedown of the language used to talk about coronavirus”², her “powerful”³ and “extraordinary”⁴ intervention.

Credit where credit is due: Maitlis’ monologue was a timely deconstruction of the “we’re all in this together” narrative of a Conservative government whose inner coterie have spent the past decade downgrading state support for the vulnerable.

Equally, given how regularly journalists proclaim that they exist to hold the powerful to account, we must ask why it makes such waves when one mainstream journalist does just that, several weeks into a crisis which has seen an unprecedented level of news coverage.

According to Robert Peston, ITV’s political editor, a journalist’s role is “to adjudicate on what all party leaders are saying – and evaluate which are more likely to make more of us safer, more prosperous, happier”⁵. There has, however, been little evidence of this from Peston during the coronavirus crisis.

The ITV journalist spent the early weeks of the crisis apparently acting as the government’s unofficial spokesperson, preparing the public for the delivery of bad news in tweets. “Revealed: elderly to be quarantined at home or in care homes for four months, in “wartime-style” mobilisation to combat Coronavirus. Full details here.”⁶

Laura Kuenessberg, who fulfils a similar role at the BBC, also appears to be confusing journalism with retyping notes passed to her by the PM’s office.

“After meeting his cabinet virtually,” she wrote in her blog

“Boris Johnson will seek to explain to the public how and why, if not exactly when, they will make the decisions that are vital, not just to our health, but the country’s suffering economy too.”⁷

Little wonder Peter Osborne has written that “political editors are so pleased to be given ‘insider’ or ‘exclusive’ information that they report it without challenge or question.”⁸ There is, however, a wider question here: to what extent do mainstream journalists like Peston and Kuenessberg truly wish to challenge government narratives?

The propaganda model predicts that the worldview of mainstream journalists and politicians will be one and the same. After all, both are accountable, first and foremost, to private power. Journalists are directly employed by private corporations and politicians rely on the wealthy and big businesses to fund the campaigns which elect them.

Moreover, leading journalists and politicians share cultural and personal connections which raise concerns about which sector of society they speak for. Laura Kuenessberg, for example, was educated at a private school⁹, her older brother is a high-ranking official at Brighton and Hove Council¹⁰ and her sister is an ex-diplomat¹¹. Robert Peston attended Oxford University and, as the son of Lord Peston¹², is entitled to use the title “Your Honourable” should he wish.

An article by the Daily Mail’s Sarah Vine¹³ offers an even clearer window into the

(Article continues over page...)

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:

(...Main article continued)

matrix of elite interconnections that cast doubt on the notion of a “free press”: **Boris Johnson’s Coronavirus Battle Has Brought the Nation Together** was published on the 7th April 2020, a day that saw a further 854 coronavirus deaths reported across the UK and growing outcry regarding the government’s lack of preparedness for the crisis and failure to provide sufficient PPE.

It is also the day Boris Johnson moved to intensive care with coronavirus symptoms.

In her article Vine conflates the Conservative Party, its policies and ideology into the “larger-than-life...bear of a man” Boris Johnson. In a further appeal to nation’s heart-strings, she asks us to consider the “heartbreaking” situation of his heavily pregnant partner Carrie Symonds, who is described as a “tough cookie” who has “fought so hard for their relationship.”

By focussing on Johnston the man (and his pregnant partner) Vine makes an appeal for readers to put ideology aside – an appeal that is, ironically, itself ideological. Vine’s article, in context, asks us to prioritise compassion for a man over critical analysis of his government’s actions. To submit to suffering with strength rather than challenge why the system meant to support us has been weakened.

The Daily Mail is the third most widely circulated paper in the UK. It is owned by a large media conglomerate (DMGT¹⁴) and traditionally aligned with conservatism. Vine, a weekly contributor to the paper, unsurprisingly produces articles in line with this “economic base.”

There is, however, an even more startling element to her

propaganda. Vine is a self-identifying “@westminsterWAG”¹⁵, the wife of Conservative MP Michael Gove and the godmother of David Cameron’s daughter!

Vine does not hide these aspects of her life – her article mentions visits to Chequers and personal acquaintance with Boris Johnson and David Cameron - but wouldn’t a free press put this information front and centre? If readers are to be truly informed shouldn’t a disclaimer be attached to articles like this - **Warning, this journalist is married to a government minister making key decisions on coronavirus!**

The problem is, as we’ve seen with Kuenessberg and Peston, if the press had to print these sorts of disclaimers newspapers would barely have room for anything else. Mainstream journalists are embedded in the Establishment, married to each other, educated alongside each other and move fluidly between the intertwined worlds of business, politics and the media (hello George Osborne, millionaire, ex-Chancellor and editor of the Evening Standard).

No wonder it stood out a mile when Maitlis took on the We’re All in This Together narrative with statements like “the disease is not a great leveller, the consequences of which, rich or poor, suffers the same.”

A glitch in the matrix will always register.

“Whoever controls the media, controls the mind”

Jim Morrison

HOMEWORK!

This article introduces the idea of a “matrix”, a web of personal interconnections between high-ranking journalists, politicians and businesspeople which casts doubt on media independence.

We invite you to explore The Matrix for yourself!

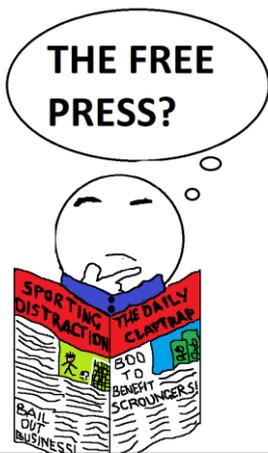
Pick any high-ranking journalist and head to their Wikipedia page. Is any close family member or friend a high-ranking politician or businessperson?

If so click the link to their Wikipedia page and see if any of *their* family or friends are high-ranking present or former members of the “Establishment”.

How many links will you click before the trail ends? A lot we suspect!

E-mail us at thefreepress@yahoo.com to let us know how many times you clicked or visit the website to look at a model answer exploring the Establishment connections of journalist Brendan O’Neill.

* 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



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