

WEEK 43, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES

AMERICAN CROSSROADS

Sunday school at
a Baptist church
built by the miners
in Lejunior, Ky., on
Sept. 15, 1946.

DEWEY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REPLACED CHRISTIANITY
WITH
COLLECTIVIST HUMANISM

See Page 3



President Donald Trump speaks with reporters before departing the White House on Marine One on Oct. 11, 2019.

The Mainstream Media Is Not 'the Press,' nor Should It Be

CLIFFORD HUMPHREY



Commentary
President Donald Trump is famous—or infamous—for calling certain mainstream news outlets the “fake news media” and even the “enemy of the people.” Trump’s tenacious criticism of major news outlets is one of the defining features of his presidency.

Few things have upset spokespersons for these outlets more than this political upstart calling them illegitimate. They tell us, though, that their concern is less for their own reputations particularly and more for the freedom of the press generally and the welfare of our republican institutions.

Fair enough. Indeed, Alexis de Tocqueville, famed author of “Democracy in America,” remarked that, in the United States, “the sovereignty of the people and freedom of the press” are “two entirely correlative things.”

With righteous indignation, Jim Acosta, CNN’s White House correspondent, once asked Trump: “Aren’t you concerned, sir, that you are undermining the people’s faith in the First

Amendment, freedom of the press—the press in this country—when you call stories you don’t like ‘fake news’? ... When you call it ‘fake news,’ you’re undermining confidence in our news media.”

But, wait a minute. Aren’t we conflating two different things here? Since when are mainstream “news media” outlets and “the press” the same thing? The president has always directed his ire at a few major media outlets—CNN, the New York Times, ABC, NBC, and CBS.

These mainstream media outlets have come to assume a monopoly of legitimacy regarding what constitutes authoritative news only since the advent of radio and television communication technologies. In truth, though, the First Amendment guarantees freedom for all Americans to publish their political opinions in the public square, in any format.

New Technologies, New Political Conditions

In the 21st century, we’re experiencing a tectonic shift in communication technologies that’s creating a correlative shift in how we do politics in this country. Now, anyone with an internet

connection can post a blog, and anyone with a microphone can publish a podcast.

This change, though, isn’t leading us into entirely new, uncharted waters. Oddly enough, it’s taking us back to a condition similar to that of the 19th century, when newspapers were more openly partisan but also more plentiful.

Of course, this new condition poses certain new difficulties, but also certain new opportunities. For example, although it may seem harder to know whose opinion to trust these days, at least we aren’t beholden to an oligarchy of self-authorized gatekeepers who cloak their biases with confident claims of objectivity.

The president’s attacks on mainstream media outlets shouldn’t be seen as an attack on “the press,” but as a criticism of their unjustified monopoly of legitimacy as authorities on political opinion and interpreters of the news.

In fact, by pointing out bias in the mainstream media, the president is helping to create space for other media outlets to report otherwise under-reported news. In this way, the president is actually protecting the freedom of the press.

Freedom of the Press, Revival of Serious Journalism

Tocqueville wrote to his French audience, “The number of periodical or semi-periodical writings in the United States passes beyond all belief.”

Newspapers were so prolific in the United States, he believed, because printers weren’t required to obtain licenses from the government to operate. Of course, that condition changed with the advent of radio and television and the Federal Communications Commission.

When Tocqueville was writing in the 1830s, there were already about 1,200 newspapers in circulation in the United States. Thirty years later, in 1860, that number more than doubled to 3,000. By 1890, that number quadrupled to 12,000. In other words, for most of our history, Americans have had more than just a few media outlets from which to get their news.

Tocqueville noticed that so great a number of newspapers guaranteed an equally great number of perspectives, so that, collectively, newspapers couldn’t “establish great currents of opinion.” How different from the monopoly of opinion that often emanates from the mainstream media today.

In fact, by pointing out bias in the mainstream media, the president is helping to create space for other media outlets to report otherwise under-reported news.

Further, Tocqueville noted that “this dividing of the strength of the press” in the 1830s had two other politically salutary effects. We’re seeing a revival of both today.

First, “the creation of a newspaper being an easy thing,” Tocqueville noticed, “everyone can take it on.” In the digital age of the 21st century, through the agency of social media, podcasts, blogs, and other means of independent journalism, we’re seeing a return to this condition of easy access to publishing.

Second, Tocqueville observed that “competition makes a newspaper unable to hope for very great profits, which prevents those with great industrial capabilities from meddling in these sorts of undertakings.” We who have grown up in the age of the 24-hour news cycle have witnessed the consequences of the industrialization of journalism.

The marriage between journalism and advertising corporatism has birthed the amalgamation perhaps best described as “infotainment.” Newsrooms often resemble gameshow studios. Are we not entertained?

Most of the independent media enterprises that have been successful recently are, it’s true, more partisan, but their success is often a product of the seriousness with which they address their subject. We may even hope that, with the corporate influence somewhat neutralized, we’ll see a revival of rigor and seriousness in the field of journalism.

I’ve argued elsewhere that the media are the guardians of public opinion and that, as citizens in a republic, we ourselves must guard the guardians. In that endeavor, we must understand the new conditions our technologies have wrought, both the difficulties and the opportunities.

Tocqueville called it nothing less than an “axiom of political science” in the United States “that the sole means of neutralizing the effects of newspapers is to multiply their number.” We ought to remember that point, as we witness the dissolution of the monopoly on authoritative opinion that the mainstream media has enjoyed for so many decades.

Further, it ought to give us hope that the freedom of the press is stronger than ever. Let us use our freedom well.

Clifford Humphrey is originally from Warm Springs, Ga. Currently, he is a doctoral candidate in politics at Hillsdale College in Michigan.

Climate Change: Who Are the Ideologues?

MARK HENDRICKSON



Commentary
Disagreements often lead to insults. When I was a kid, when one of us thought another was “all wet” (wrong), the favored insult was, “Your mother wears army boots.” Silly, wasn’t it?

The equivalent barb for adult (not necessarily grownup) intellectuals is to call someone with whom they disagree an “ideologue.” While ideologue has a non-emotive meaning (“a person who believes very strongly in particular principles”), when used as an epithet, it’s an insult. It brands one’s opponent as dogmatic, impervious to reason, close-minded, and unwilling to reconsider one’s beliefs in light of facts and evidence.

The U.N.’s most famous climate change bureaucracy, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and its media allies deride and denounce dissenters from their official orthodoxy as “ideologues.” But is it possible that the IPCC clique includes its share of ideologues? Let’s see.

Climate Models and Flawed Predictions

First, consider climate change models. There’s a methodological split, if not an ideological schism, here. The IPCC and journalists who predict climate-related catastrophes cite climate change computer models. I don’t know the current count of such models, but a few years ago there were 102.

Those models share a common problem: When scientists back-test those models by entering known data from recent decades, it turns out that actual global temperature rises far more slowly than the models say it should. (The one model that predicts the least warming is a Russian model in which CO2 is modeled to have much less influence on temperature than the other models assign to it.)

By contrast, the many scientists who for years have been disputing the models’ dire pre-

They’re force-feeding us a green version of Mao’s ‘Little Red Book.’

dictions, joined over the past few months by Belgian, Japanese, Finnish, Dutch (representing 500 scientists), and Italian scientists (over 90 of them), denounce the computer models for gross arbitrariness, the neglect of critical factors, and sheer uselessness. These scientists rely on hard data—actual measurements.

So, who are the ideologues—the scientists who cite facts and real-world evidence, or the scientists who insist that we base our public policies on models that aren’t validated by observed facts?

Second, look at the track record of those predicting climate catastrophes. Such alarming predictions have been going on for the past 50 years. Dozens of supposed deadlines have passed without one of the catastrophist predictions yet coming close to happening.

One IPCC report unequivocally stated, “long-term prediction of future climate states is not possible” because “the climate system is a coupled nonlinear chaotic system.”

The Competitive Enterprise Institute gathered over 30 news reports of egregious failed predictions in past years. It’s sobering to see how “the most advanced scientific knowledge” repeatedly led to spectacularly wrong predictions—predictions that weren’t even in the ballpark. See also Mark J. Perry’s “18 Spectacularly Wrong Predictions ...”. Well, as I’ve written before, nobody is an expert about the future.

Again, though, this raises the question: Who are the ideologues? Is it those who have repeatedly been spectacularly wrong, but who insist that this time they’re so right that anyone who disagrees with their speculative conclusions is a denier of reality? Or is it those who look at the comically awful track record of environmentalist predictions and conclude that some skepticism is warranted?

Pre-selected Agenda

If an “ideologue” is someone who pursues a pre-selected agenda under false pretenses, then consider the following statements by some of the powerful climate

change movers and shakers:

Ottmar Edenhofer, IPCC senior official, said in 2010: “One has to free oneself from the illusion that international climate policy is environmental policy. ... [O]ne must say clearly that we redistribute de facto the world’s wealth by climate policy.”

Christine Stewart, former Canadian Minister of the Environment, said in 1988: “No matter if the science of global warming is all phony ... climate change [provides] the greatest opportunity to bring about justice and equality in the world.”

Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said in 2015: “[W]e are setting ourselves the task of intentionally ... chang[ing] the economic development model that has been reigning for at least 150 years ...”

Saikat Chakrabarti, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez’s then-chief of staff, said in May 2019: “The interesting thing about the Green New Deal is it wasn’t originally a climate thing at all. ... [W]e really think of it as a how-do-you-change-the-entire-economy thing.”

The March 2009 U.N. Global Green New Deal report stated: “We must not miss this chance to fundamentally shift the trajectory of human civilization.”

Despite the obvious priority that key players in the climate change movement place on political and economic objectives over scientific concerns, following traveling journalists have insisted vehemently that “deniers” must not only concede a need for a massive top-down restructuring of nations’ economies, but also accept as indisputable truth the unproven “scientific” theories and opinions adopted by the IPCC.

This reeks of totalitarianism. They want everyone to submit to the elite’s grand plans and dutifully and unquestioningly recite their official catechism. They demand that we think what they tell us to think. They’re force-feeding us a green version of Mao’s “Little Red Book.”

Indeed, the quasi-religious to-

talitarian nature of the IPCC’s official party line is that there is now a movement encouraging citizens to “confess” to climate sins. When will the show trials begin?

Leftist ideology is the only reasonable explanation for why the IPCC repeatedly criticizes the United States while treating the People’s Republic of China with kid gloves.

By way of comparison, the United States has about the same amount of CO2 emissions today as five years ago and a capacity of 107.1 gigawatts of energy from CO2-heavy coal, while China has, since 2011, burned more coal than the rest of the world combined and has current plans to increase its coal-based energy output domestically by over 20 percent while also “building hundreds of coal-fired power plants in other countries,” according to NPR.

How ironic—no, cynical—that the Chinese regime had the brazenness to tell last month’s U.N. climate change summit that they are “entitled” to monetary support for addressing climate change.

The evidence that a leftist political ideology permeates the climate change movement is abundant. While the ability to forecast future climate conditions will continue to elude us (as the IPCC has stated), it’s safe to predict that life for the common man will take a radical turn for the worse if the peoples of the world let political elites amass the power they crave to restructure economies and redesign human society.

Power-hungry elitist ideologues pose a clear and present danger to human beings.

Mark Hendrickson, an economist, recently retired from the faculty of Grove City College, where he remains a fellow for economic and social policy at the Institute for Faith and Freedom.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



Hoesung Lee (C), chair of the IPCC, speaks during a press conference of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) at Songdo Convensia in Incheon, South Korea, on Oct. 8, 2018.

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Stephen Gregory
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