

America's Trust in Mainstream Media Hits Rock Bottom

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Gone are the days when US consumers looked to the nightly news and print media as a trusted source of information, and especially if they hold conservative views, according to a new poll by the Columbia Journalism Review.



Things are going from bad to worse for the US legacy media as its trust credentials have reached an all-time new low, as if that were possible. It has even achieved a lower trust rating than lawyers and members of Congress.

The introduction to the CJR poll provided the following ominous opening: "For decades, we've known that Americans don't trust the press. What we haven't known is how people view the makings of journalism, from the use of fact checkers and anonymous sources to the question of whether money skews journalistic decision-making. This new national poll for CJR answers those questions, and points to how big the trust gap remains."

Indeed, the cynicism on the street should have every mainstream media purveyor in a state of absolute panic.

In one particular finding, it was revealed that many news consumers believe that reporters, seemingly in an effort to push forward with a political agenda, are too quick to run with a story before knowing all of the facts. This has never been more true before than in the Trump era where anything goes, so long as it trashes conservatives.

We have just witnessed ample proof of that media tendency in several high-profile cases. This week, attorneys for Nick Sandmann, a student from Covington Catholic High School, filed a lawsuit against the Washington Post, seeking \$250 million in damages for negligence.

Sandmann and his fellow students became the target of false accusations of racism during a trip to Washington, D.C. The mainstream media, as well as many politicians and celebrities, pushed the story that the young student, a Trump supporter, had taunted an elderly Native American Indian near the Lincoln Memorial. The story quickly fell apart, however, after video of the encounter and eyewitness accounts destroyed the media version of events.

Attorneys for the boy claim that the Bezos-owned newspaper "wrongfully targeted and bullied

Nicholas because he was the white, Catholic student wearing a red 'Make America Great Again' souvenir cap on a school field trip to the January 18 March for Life in Washington, D.C."

Todd McMurtry, one of the attorneys for the Catholic student, called the Washington Post "a weaponized news outlet that used its power and strength to destroy Nick Sandmann's reputation."

This leads us to another part of the CJR poll that helps explain the causes for the political crisis now gripping the country, and that is the overwhelming mistrust that conservative-leaning Americans have in the media. When asked how much confidence they had in the media, almost 70 percent of Republican respondents answered "hardly any confidence at all," while just 25 percent of Democrats held a similar opinion.

That is unsurprising considering that the bulk of the people who work in the media tend to hold leftist views. This is no secret to Republicans. Investor's Business Daily summed up the situation nicely: "Ask journalists, and they'll likely tell you they play things right down the middle. They strive to be 'fair.' They're 'centrists.'" Sorry, not true. The profound leftward ideological bias of the Big Media is the main reason why America now seems saturated with "fake news." Journalists, besotted with their own ideology, are no longer able to recognize their own bias."

In the halcyon days of pre-Internet journalism, the media was at liberty to report on stories without fear of recrimination that some alternative news site, or even a citizen journalist providing analysis on a YouTube channel, would call them out. Those days are long over. Today, there are simply too many other ways to verify the credence of the media's damaged product.

Consider the mainstream media's use of sources to support their stories. Since it is important to protect the identity of these insiders, it is considered natural and necessary to quote these individuals as "anonymous sources." However, the increasing tendency to rely almost solely on unnamed individuals has made consumers of the news increasingly skeptical about the news and information they are being fed. After all, who's to say that the reporter, left-leaning in his or her political ideology, is not just sitting at his desk dreaming up lines like Tom Clancy, quoting at random some "senior military adviser" or "retired high-ranking diplomat" speaking on condition of anonymity?

But the impression this leaves behind has had other unintended consequences. Not only do news consumers increasingly believe they are being fed lines from some fictional characters, 60 percent now believe that these sources, whoever they may be, are actually paying for the media to run with the stories. That is a level of cynicism never achieved before, and one which should make the media moguls quiver in their ivory towers.

The CJR poll is a wake-up call to the mainstream media that it cannot continue with a 'business as usual' approach any longer. The modern news consumer is too savvy, too informed to be so easily fooled. When the average consumer of mainstream media can read through the lines, as it were, and understand they are being taken for a ride, it is game over. A whole new business model built on trust is desperately needed. But can the media deliver such a product? Nothing less than its survival depends upon it.

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