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UNBALANCED REPORTING

By Steve Bakke  April 22, 2018



Here's what provoked me:

A quote from NBC's Chuck Todd grabbed my attention as a great example of how news reporting is misunderstood, even by those working in the industry at the highest levels. What do you think? Do you agree?

Here's my response:

Unbalanced Reporting

NBC's Chuck Todd recently stated: "One thing we're not is the opposition. We've never tried to be part of the political debate, but people want to drag us [the press] into it. We shouldn't take the bait. We're simply a voice of truth."

At one time I wouldn't have taken exception to Todd's statement. That was when there was an understanding that news reports were complete and accurate as to the facts - i.e. "the truth." But there's been a subtle evolution.

News reporting is supposed to report the complete facts, - i.e. all of what's said or done. Editorial opinion should be left to opinion analysts and commentators. But standards have evolved, and I think Todd's statement is a reflection of how news reporting is now misunderstood by many, including some of those at the highest levels in the news media.

Comments, descriptions, and other facts are sometimes described as having the "seal of approval" for truthfulness. Under the new standards, however, this now implies an element of judgment. Declaring that "only the truth is reported," starts to impinge on the very separate job of expressing opinions. The time-honored practice of "truthfully reporting the complete facts" has evolved into "reporting only what is considered to be 'the truth.'"

Read those last two descriptions carefully. They mean very different things.