

Let's Schmooze

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The Fog of Fake News

Remember the good ole days, when we were confident that the mass media was what it purported to be ~ an accurate and trustworthy reporter? News was presented as the unbiased reporting of hard fact. Editorials were presented as opinions and commentaries. Marketing was clearly presented as advertisements. Everything was clearly presented as what it actually was, without any hidden agendas. We could be confident that we always knew the nature of what we were reading or viewing ~ what was data reporting, what was editorial opinion, and what was sales marketing.

We have come a long way from that clarity. Now we have no idea if news items are valid, or if they are just made up out of thin air in order to push a particular point of view, or to cause us to act in a certain way. The crafty infomercial, born as the marketing sponsorship of news events, has come full circle, and now we have the full-blown fake news item. Questions of bias have been replaced by questions of raw validity. We no longer have any idea if what we are reading or viewing is really true, or who might be behind the fake news item, or what their hidden agenda might be.

We shouldn't be too surprised that we have morphed into this murky situation. It just so happens to be part of human nature. For ages, politicians have played with the facts (especially at election times), and advertisers have always wanted consumers to accept their advertising claims as the undisputed truth.

Teenagers are probably the quintessential masters of mixing up fact and fiction, especially as they develop their new sense of autonomy and independence. Try squeezing the "truth" out of a hormone-driven youngster when they come home late at night way after curfew. The "facts" get mixed up in a flurry of explanations!

It is simply fundamental human nature for individuals to present the "facts" in the best light to themselves. The obscuration of unsavory truths is the game to be played. In today's fast moving world, everyone becomes a "spin master."

Good, old-fashioned news reporting was like being able to drive down the road and clearly see what was in front of us, and what was to the side of us. When fake news muscles into the media in a big way, it is as if a dense fog has settled down around our vehicle. We can no longer see the road, or what is coming in our direction ~ much less where we might be, and what direction we might actually be traveling in. That's how bad accidents happen.

Administering a government is like driving down a road. We need to clearly see all that is around us. When fog creeps in, a country can end up in the ditch just as quickly as a traveling vehicle.

Fake news reporting is a deadly threat to our country and to its governance. We need to immediately get back to the good, old-fashioned valid reporting of the facts, with editorial commentary and marketing advertisements clearly marked as such. A good start would be for everyone to take what the other guy is saying with a healthy dose of salt.

The last presidential election seems to have been affected by numerous fake news items. Most observers would probably agree that all those fake news items are currently bedeviling the new administration. It will eventually lead to someone's ruin, and put the electorate in the position of not knowing who or what to trust.

That's not good.

~ *'til we meet again* ~