

The subtle and not-so-subtle bias of National Public Radio

Media researchers have been training their sights on our country's publicly-funded media for decades. Number one among their targets is National Public Radio (NPR). These researchers have discovered a pronounced liberal bias among journalists and their reporting as have former NPR executives according to an article in the New York Post. This comes as no surprise to those of us who regularly listen to 'Morning Edition' and Amy Goodman's program, "Democracy Now: The War and Peace Report." The latter program is an unabashed critic of everything conservative and has been so for the past 23 years.

Not to single Ms. Goodman out (as there are many other left-wing journalists I could pick on at NPR) but hers is a program that is unique in the sense that it does not hide its bias whereas other individuals like the proper Scott Simon, for example, are more subtle. This morning, while interviewing the attorney for a young Russian woman who is being investigated by the FBI for not registering as a foreign 'agent' (not spy), he couldn't help himself. .. again. He had to interject a last-minute question into the interview.

He said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Did you see any evidence linking your client or Russia to the NRAT" This type of innuendo torpedo is typical of NPR and not confined to Scott Simon alone, but we know from previously reporting that Simon (and many of his more 'gotcha' colleagues) have it in for the NRA and all of America's gun-owners. Foremost among them is Ailsa Chang of 'All things considered,' who is unafraid to hide her liberal bias. A few months ago, she was interviewing a non-policy person of the Dept. of Homeland Security and couldn't let him finish telling her about budget matters when she interrupted and grilled him about HS immigration policy in a very adversarial and uncivil way. Fortunately, she earned herself a rebuke from many of us for her street activist interviewing tactics.

There are many ways to show bias (or hide it) if you are NPR or any media outlet for that matter. One of the principal ones is the choice of subjects or stories you cover. For this you need a liberal-biased producer who sees an opportunity through a pre-determined story line to criticize conservatives, Republicans or the President. Next, the producer needs to find a liberal-biased journalist (sometimes an outside free-lancer not employed by NPR) to carry the water. Then you confer with them about what you would like to 'uncover' through the reportage. (Producers will always try to link up an appropriately aggressive or tenacious reporter/journalist with the story so that it will have a powerful one-two punch.) For example, you could give Amy Goodman literally anything and she will find a way to keelhaul conservatives with it. If the producer wants to insert innuendo rather than launch direct fire, he will choose a journalist with a 'moderate' (for NPR, that is) reputation and a recognized moderate program to launch it.

Another excellent way to interject a liberal opinion is through the type or choice of questions asked. THIS is the preferred method of propagandizing an interview or narrative. The theory is that if you control the questions (rather than giving the interviewee the opportunity to tell his own story) you can better control the outcomes. A carefully formulated question that contains a couched implication (of guilt, for example) is a sure-fire winner, guaranteed to throw the interviewee off guard and earn points for the journalist. If the tough question is delivered by one of the many smooth-talking reporters at NPR, its impact is softened by their dulcet tones and the program they represent or co-host. In other words, listeners believe in the sincerity and friendliness (and fairness) of the interviewer and are willing to give an unfair or, as in the case of Chang's interview with HS, a politically-charged question a pass.

So, now we have a biased producer, a biased journalist, a biased slate of questions and a questioning format that is bound to force a mistake from an interviewee. Now all we need are victims willing to voluntarily walk into the NPR web. There is no shortage of them, whether they are in government or private industry. Going on NPR does carry certain risks, with it as opposed to being interviewed on openly-biased media outlets.

Any conservative interviewed on MSNBC or CNN knows that they will be verbally drawn and quartered, just as they will be treated with kid gloves if they show up on Fox News. Depending on the topic, the program and the journalist, an appearance on NPR could be a double-spring steel bear trap or something more subtle. Either way, it's a game of Russian roulette. Sooner or later, maybe after several interviews that have lulled you into a false sense of security, you will encounter the chamber with your name on it.

Does NPR also produce a good product? Definitely. Its stories are often well-researched and well-edited. What their stories aren't, however, is uniformly fair and balanced. Most of them have a point of view, and that point of view is decidedly liberal. It would be far better for us listeners to hear an admission of their bias before their airing, like a disclaimer on a pharmaceutical ad, so that we can switch channels before wasting our time listening to liberal-biased pablum.

There is one big reason to praise NPR, however, and it is for having an ombudsman whose job it is to be a referee. To quote NPR, *"The Ombudsman serves as an independent mediator on questions raised by the audience regarding the standards and ethics of NPR's journalism. "So, if you have a comment on content or believe that a certain reporter crossed the line or just want to praise them, you can direct them to Elizabeth Jensen the NPR ombudsman at email@et.npr.org. Remember, it's your tax dollars that fund them, so hold their feet to the fire.*

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