

911 and the Propaganda Model

The need to deter democracy by alienating public opinion from public policy is one that has been long understood. Back in the 1921, the highly influential political columnist and media analyst Walter Lippmann, wrote the book “Public Opinion”, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/pbpnn10.txt> where he discussed the need for the “manufacture of consent”; given the inherent pitfalls and barriers to an accurate and effective public opinion (democracy, essentially), it is necessary that this opinion is crafted by a higher sphere of influence. This was understood very well by Edward Bernays, who was the founder of Public Relations (he indeed coined the term), and the formulator of not just corporate, but also political PR. He sketches out his views on this in his 1928 work, “Propaganda” <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/bernprop.html> where he states that “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society”, suggesting like Lippmann, that democracy is a “chaos” that needs regulation from above. This “above” is a small section of elites: “We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of.” These are the people who will ensure that the masses are sedated, and free to run their daily lives, without participating in the broader picture of public policy, given the dangers that this would pose to the influence of said elites, and thus the smooth functioning of society. To paraphrase Bernays, a leader must serve by leading, not lead by serving

He was, as mentioned, the formulator of political PR, and his influence was enormous. This extended to the PR campaign throughout the American media to garner support for the subsequent violent overthrow in 1954 of the newly democratically elected President of Guatemala, Jacobo Allenz, whose crime was to threaten to end the American United Fruit Company’s exploitation of their country’s resources (whence the term “banana republic”) by nationalising the fruit industry. His views were of resounding significance in the corporate world, forever changing it, and the same is true of his impact on the world of politics; necessary at a time when democracy was becoming increasingly rampant, with the growing success of civil rights movement, educated classes and so on. The need to deter the threat of democracy was well understood, and seamlessly implemented.

This implementation occurred with the advent of corporate media outlets, roughly concomitant with the arrival of Bernays views. Big business oils the political wheels in Washington, and the relationship between big corporations and political parties is grossly symbiotic. This allows for an overlapping of interests, and with a corporate-owned media, it allows for government and corporate interests to be shielded by the yoke of “democratic propaganda”. With the predicate of free-market economics, it was inevitable that the mass of mainstream media outlets was going to end up in the hands of a very select group of corporations. Thus, whereas one has the illusion of dealing with a great

number of independent media bodies when one turns on the television or goes to a newsstand, the reality is quite the opposite. What you will be hearing/reading, is “corporatised” news, stemming from General Electric or AOL TimeWarner, rather than independent journalists whose sole loyalty is to objective reporting.

This was not just confined to the US in its propagation- indeed almost immediately after its inception in 1922, the BBC was deterring democratic processes by providing a platform for Baldwin’s Tory party to put down the general workers’ strike that was happening (the Tories being afraid of a potential Russian-style revolution), while at the same time denying the workers a platform to make their voice heard. This had progressed to such a point, that by 1945, George Orwell could only manage with great difficulty to get his masterpiece, *Animal Farm*, published. It was close to impossible to criticise Stalinist Russia at that time, and he was refused by publisher after publisher. He elaborates upon this fact in the introduction to the book, never published for obvious reasons, but available here <http://home.iprimus.com.au/korob/Orwell.html> and he states, quite accurately, that the diktat for what goes and what doesn’t in public discourse, is set from above. In 1945, Stalin and Churchill were buddies, or at least allies, and so criticising this monster, publicly, was a no go. This occurred in the US as well, where Trotsky’s biography of Stalin (highly critical of course) was unable to find a publisher. Fast forward about 5 years, the Cold War has begun, the West wants to depict Russia as the “evil empire”, and so public criticism of Stalin becomes accepted, and sales of *Animal Farm* take off. Nothing had changed between these two moments, factually speaking- the empire was just as “evil” as it had been beforehand- however, the diktat from above had changed, and public opinion, manufactured as Bernays and Lippmann had advocated, through mass media propaganda, rolled over like a lap dog.

This system of democratic propaganda is infinitely more effective than its more laboured totalitarian cousin, because it gives the impression of liberty of thought, whilst denying it outright. A group of Russian diplomats, touring the US in the 80’s are said to have told a US official how astonished they were that everyone thought so congruently with what the government wanted them to think. They said that in their countries, they have to send people to the gulags to get that done! This illustrates well the insidious nature of the “democratic” propaganda system.

It stems from the above mentioned structure of media. In the US, about 90% of all media circulation is owned by 5 corporations. This means that uncritical public opinion will be shaped according to the whims of these corporations. How this works is very simple, and can be illustrated with the example of Fox News, the most watched news channel in the US. They are owned by News Corp, whose boss Rupert Murdoch has stated openly that he owns media in order to propagate his view of the world onto people. So in order to do this within Fox, all he has to do is hire someone to run it, who mirrors his ideology, which he found in Roger Ailes, the former media strategist to Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Bush Snr.

Ailes will hire someone to run the departments who mirrors him, who will do the same, who will do the same, and so on. It is this mirroring of ideology that ensures that the organisation remains homogeneous in its output- this is a phenomenon that we are all aware of in almost every mass media outlet that exists. Total homogeneity on the main issues- you won't pick up a copy of The Sun, and read on one page that the war is good, and on the next that the war is a crime, for instance. The agenda for this homogeneity obviously comes from somewhere, namely, as we have seen in Fox, by the man at the top, then trickling down. This is the same in any and every media organisation (and indeed most large companies). It is not an eclectic gaggle of independent opinions, rather a concentration of people who happen to believe what their owner wants people working for him to believe. Again, this adds to the insidious nature of the whole shooting match. Generally speaking, this is not scripted propaganda (though this does exist). All members of the media, from Bill O Reilly to Stephen Colbert, are where they are because they will report a sanitized version of events. To quote Noam Chomsky when challenged by then BBC political correspondent Andrew Marr about his belief in this system of propaganda, "I have no doubt you believe everything you say. My point is if you believed anything different, you wouldn't be sitting where you are now."

I am, shortly going to use 9/11 as the main example for this happening, but to take 2 examples of this happening - a study was done by the Glasgow University Media Group, which illustrated that the more people watched the news, directly, the less they knew correctly, about the Israel-Palestine conflict. An example was the fact that 90% of those interviewed thought that it was the Palestinians who were the illegal occupiers. Another example would be to look at the way the Iraq War has been covered. You will routinely see it described, especially by the BBC, as a blunder, a mistake, a quagmire, and so on- but how much focus do you get on the lies that were told to get us into this? Or the sometimes hundreds of Iraqis getting killed every day? You will do well to read a shred of this anywhere, and yet these are the essential facts. We can complain when we get into a war that we don't win by calling it a "blunder"; or when our soldiers are getting killed by calling it a "quagmire", but these are the limits on public discourse. As Stephen Sackur asked George Galloway upon the latter stating he would not shake Tony Blair's hand, since he deemed him to be a war criminal, "Are you not proud to be British?" There are very stringent limits on what can, and cannot be said in public.

The Propaganda Model, as it has been formulated and named by Chomsky and Edward Herman, has too many examples to broach any more than I already have. But there is no doubt, that there could not be a more astonishing and important example of it than 9/11. If we proceed on the easily demonstrable premise that mass media censorship of rudimentary and critical issues will occur when powerful interests are to be protected, then you will never find a better example of this than in the mass media's treatment of the attacks. Possibly the most reported on news event of all time, still eliciting direct comment even today;

and yet, the overwhelming majority of the population in the West is unaware, blissfully so, of the most rudimentary facts of that day. Go out and ask people how many skyscrapers fell on 9/11. Out of 100 people, will you get more than 5? I think you will be lucky. Due to the internet groundswell of awareness to the critical issue of WTC7, the 47 story building housing the CIA, Secret Service, Federal Office of Emergency Management, and other federal agencies, that fell in a manner described by Danny Jowenko, a leading implosion expert, thusly: "That is controlled demolition. Absolutely certain. This is a professional job done by a team of experts", the media is now having to combat this censorship, bit by bit. This will happen with vague apologetics, such as "It was forgotten about in the confusion of the day", and other evasions; however, nothing can get round the white elephant that is the fact that the collapse of this massive building, though receiving proportionate coverage on 9/11 (indeed being reported as collapsed by the BBC and CNN prior to its collapse), very soon after, disappeared down the Orwellian memory hole, oblivious to the public consciousness.

Another equally astonishing omission from public discourse is the 1st reported terrorist attack in New York on 9/11. In an age where information flows so freely, how can something so basic be effectively suppressed? That it has is merely testament to the power of the Western Propaganda system- awareness of this is even less than of WTC 7.. The first reported attack was not flight 11 hitting the North Tower, rather seconds before that, of a bomb going off in the basement of the same building. This was reported by many people, significantly enough for the initial premise of the FBI to have been that <http://youtube.com/watch?v=SGE6GNKNpPA> this was indeed a dual attack- the plane hitting the building, and a bomb in the basement. You will not read a shred about this now, in any mainstream journal. This is the first time in a democratic society, that there has been testimony, multiple, independent and corroborating, of a bomb in an important and populous location, that has just been forgotten. No criminal investigation, no reporting by the media, and a whitewash from the Government through the 911 Commission Report. Once again, this is as strong evidence as is conceivable for the overwhelming power of the Propaganda Model, that such a basic fact could disappear from the public mind, simply at the media's behest. And if we follow the premise of the Model, that gross censorship will in general be indicative of shielding of powerful interests, we come to a firm conclusion.

A final point, and one which should have been one of the 1st things on any reasonable and honest journalist's plate, post 9/11, was that 9/11 was precisely what was stated to be needed by the US, by the Bush administration to be, in the guise of the neo-conservative think tank, the Project for the New American Century. Their membership, including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, had stated in their biennial policy white paper, in September 2000, that the US needed "a catastrophic and catalysing event, like a new Pearl Harbor", to initiate a radicalisation in military behaviour, that looks astonishingly

similar to the current War on Terror. Once again, this is something of which you will not find a scrap anywhere, which, in an environment of ideologically neutral reporters, would be inconceivable.

The Propaganda Model was formulated in 1988 in the book "Manufacturing Consent", and as it approaches its 20th anniversary, 9/11 casts an important new light on affairs. For the internet causes a threat to be posed to mass media hegemony on public opinion. The fact that according to Zogby, 36% of Americans, in May 2006, believed that the US government probably had a role in the 9/11 attacks, is highly illustrative of this threat, as this had occurred with zero assistance from the mass media. So the mass media, this time like good attack hounds rather than good lapdogs, kicked into action. The "9/11 Truth Movement" was given exposure, purely for the fact that it needed to be confronted and decried. Other than whacking it, demagogically and pejoratively, with the term "conspiracy theory", the connotation for which is an unsubstantiated social paradigm which will ensure de facto that the Establishment always gets the benefit of the doubt, members of the movement were invited on shows to be told (and for those watching to be told), routinely, how much they, and those who followed them, hated their country and supported "the terrorists". It didn't stop there- celebrities such as Charlie Sheen and Rosie O'Donnell were automatically lampooned as "kooks" and "whackos", with "independent analysts" appearing on news programs to state how these people's careers would be over if they continued to speak about this, and how they should be "strung up for treason" for "giving comfort to the enemy". O'Donnell lost/quit her job, illustrating very perfectly how the establishment will either knock a figure back into line, or out of the system, if they stray from the bounds of permitted public discourse (as also happened with Andrew Gilligan at the BBC, though not related to 9/11).

So this cudgel was used often and bludgeoningly enough to quell any potential, though unlikely threat, that such suspicions could gain approbation in mainstream discourse. This is a very interesting development to the Model, and it suggests that should any other threatening suspicions arise through non-Establishment sources in the future; the Establishment will react with confrontation by distortion, as they have done with 9/11.

So it could be argued that there has never been a more cogent example of the Propaganda Model, than what we have witnessed with the mass media's treatment of 9/11. Rudimentary facts disappearing into oblivion, proponents being vilified and slandered, audiences being told in no uncertain terms what to think- that powerful interests are being protected is crystal clear; that independent minds need to be enlisted to re-investigate the facts of 9/11 is all too urgent.