

They Really, Really, Really Don't Like This President

For many years now, I have been making the case that bias in the news is not the result of a conspiracy, despite what some friends on the right may think. Journalists don't go to work in the morning, meet in a dark room, give the secret handshake and salute, and then map out a strategy to bash conservatives. Granted, it looks that way. But that's not how it actually happens.

It's been my experience (I was a network news correspondent for almost 30 years) that bias is the product of groupthink, of too many like-minded people working in the newsroom who have similar views on what's good and what's bad, on what's right and what's wrong. The result is that they see anything to the right of center as conservative (not especially good), but anything to the left of center as middle of the road, as moderate – as *reasonable* (very good).

That's how bias has infected the news – which brings us to Donald Trump and how the mainstream media are treating him.

The other day Donald Trump's economic team unveiled the outlines of a proposed overhaul of our tax system. "Trump Unveils Broad Tax-Cut Plan," read the straightforward, no frills headline in the Wall Street Journal. Here's what the New York Times plastered across five of its six column front page: "Tax Overhaul Would Aid Wealthiest."

Well, since the wealthy pay most of the tax in this country, any cuts – as a strict matter of mathematics – might very well aid the wealthiest. But why let that tidbit get in the way.

Under that headline the Times notes that the plan would eliminate the estate tax and the alternative minimum tax, "both moves," the paper of record informs us "that would

richly benefit Mr. Trump.”

Are we really supposed to believe that the president came up with this tax plan – whether you like its components or not – to benefit himself? Ask the next progressive you run into and I’ll bet the answer is a great big ... YES.

Or just ask the gods who write editorials at the Times, a page where the motto might as well be, “Bash Trump Every Chance You Get.” On the morning after the plan was unveiled, an editorial tells us that the president’s tax proposal is “a laughable stunt by a gang of plutocrats looking to enrich themselves at the expense of the country’s future.”

And on the op-ed page, one of the paper’s gaggle of liberal columnists, Nicholas Kristoff, writes that the Trump plan is a “budget-busting gift to zillionaires like himself.”

Ok you say, it’s the New York Times, the Bible of liberal journalism in America. What should we expect? And you’re right. But the TV networks, where tens of millions of Americans get their news, take their cues from this particular Bible and then the Trump-can’t-do-anything-right message gets even more play.

According to a study by the conservative Media Research Center, in his first 80 days in office coverage of the new president on ABC, NBC, and CBS was overwhelmingly negative.

Eighty-nine percent of all stories on the president, the study found, had a negative slant. But on some topics, the negative numbers were even higher.

For the record: Donald Trump brings a lot of the negativity on himself. He says things that are instantly shown to be suspect at best, flat out untrue at worst. So negative coverage isn’t necessarily the same as biased coverage. Sometimes negative coverage is honest, well-deserved coverage. But let’s examine some specific areas the study covered.

According to the Media Research Center, news about the president's travel ban executive order was 93 percent negative.

Stories about alleged collusion between Team Trump and the Russians was 97 percent negative.

Plans to repeal ObamaCare had at 94 percent negative slant.

Immigration stories got a 93 percent negative rating.

And stories about President's Trump's allegation that President Obama wiretapped Trump tower during the campaign had a 99 percent negative slant.

On that last statistic: Donald Trump is lucky the coverage wasn't 100 percent negative. His allegation wasn't true. And if it were true he would have produced evidence of its veracity by now.

There's an example of negative coverage that is not biased coverage.

"I think the elite liberal media do not think that Donald Trump is worthy of being president," Rich Noyes, the MRC's research director and one of the report's authors, said in an interview. "They don't like his policies. They don't like his character. And I think they are trying to just run his campaign into overtime to continue to try to discredit him in the eyes of the American public."

As I say, President Trump brings a lot of the negativity on himself, but Noyes is on to something. The same media that slobbered over Barack Obama and gave him a fawning honeymoon period – and much more – have no such intentions when it comes to our current president.

At the outset of this column, I wrote that I have long believed there is no liberal media conspiracy aimed at conservative politicians. It's just that liberal journalists

salivate more when going after Republicans than Democrats.

So, with this president, a lot of journalists go to work in the morning, and while they may not actually conspire with other like-minded liberal journalists, they start the day, I believe, with ideas about good and bad and right and wrong – and they've come to some conclusions that are firmly planted in their sensibilities: that Donald Trump has no business being president; that he's unfit for the office; simply, that he's a jerk.

And then they cover the news with those thoughts in mind.

A sizeable chunk of Americans don't like this president. An even bigger chunk doesn't like the journalists who cover him. Both have points worth thinking about.