

Opinion

Is journalistic integrity from the major media too much to ask for?

By JOHN LENTINE
STAFF WRITER
JPL184@PSU.EDU

On Thursday, March 12th, 2009, the battle between Jon Stewart of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* and Jim Cramer of CNBC's *Mad Money* came to a thrilling conclusion.

For those of you missed out on what happened, Jon Stewart did a segment criticizing CNBC. Jim Cramer had taken offense to what he said and fired back, appearing on every NBC network affiliate station and talking about it. Stewart of course, fired back, this time directly at Cramer. This went on for weeks until Cramer appeared on *The Daily Show*.

Now, let's forget for a second that Stewart spoke about the downfalls of the market, exposed what goes on behind the scenes on Wall Street, and completely destroyed Jim Cramer in this interview.

There was one point that Stewart made that was an important one to focus on. That is, the pundits of CNBC knew exactly what was going to happen in the market before it happened, while publicly playing down the issue. To say this is an understatement, for anyone in the housing industry or banking industry could have told you that there was something inherently wrong.

If an economist would so much as mention this impending disaster on television however, they were called nihilists, pessimists, and doomsayers. They were ridiculed and they were ignored.

What importance does this hold for an American citizen? The problem, as I see it, is that for years the entire media ignored an obviously impending crisis, sacrificing quality reporting for ratings and profits, although this is nothing new in our country. This fact is troubling since the media is the only private industry protected by the United States Constitution. Not only is it mentioned, it's in the 1st amendment of the Bill of Rights, right up there with freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The reason, just like the right to bear arms, is that a free press is necessary for the security of the free State. The press is sometimes referred to as the fourth branch of government in this country. Its sole purpose is to be an additional check on our elected leaders, acting as a watchdog to inform the general public as to what their government is up to. This is hardly a reality in today's society.

The true reality of the situation is that news organizations are not "free." This cannot be the case when they are for-profit industries, so consolidated that only a few companies own every major news

outlet. In 1983, there were 50 corporations that controlled the majority of U.S. media. By 2004, there were 5: Viacom, Time-Warner, Disney, Murdoch's News Corp, and German corporation Bertelsmann Media Worldwide. This means that Americans, overall, receive the viewpoints that five guys will allow.

Although Stewart made Cramer and CNBC his sacrificial lamb on this issue, it is unfortunate that every news organization can be placed in the same category. It was suggested in that interview, that CNBC was in bed with the financial companies. Although it is not fair to say that CNBC is "in cahoots" with Wall Street, it is in fact a fair statement to say that news organizations have their loyalties. I do not mean that a newspaper is liberal or a TV network is conservative. A news station's true loyalty is to who writes the paycheck, just like your loyalty is to the person who writes yours - especially while at work.

You may think that it is you, the consumer, who writes the paycheck to CNN, MSNBC, FOX, and CNBC when you pay for your cable bill, when in fact, the real paycheck is signed by the fine people who make those commercials you all love so much. By buying airtime, they reserve the right to pull out and cease the sponsorship of that

network or television program. This gives large sponsors a certain amount of leverage regarding what is and is not said. When you listen to underground media, you will even hear admissions that they are restricted in what they can say for sponsorship reasons.

What is even more unfortunate is that our news programs have become just another way to get ratings. Debates on TV have become a joke, interviews have become too friendly, and quality journalism has gone out the window. Even worse, half the pundits on the networks are completely unqualified to have their jobs. Some are outright racist, others seem quite fascist, and most are simply ideologues.

It's become difficult to take guys like Glen Beck seriously as a news anchor when he's talking about the battle of Armageddon during his news show, as if he was the host of the 700 Club. I would honestly expect more from a former hedge-fund manager, but for Jim Cramer to hold up a picture of Lenin while he talks about Obama means he has his economic theories mixed up a little. With an economic crisis occurring, one might think that Lou Dobbs would take a rest from persecuting the Mexican community and redirect his focus on labor outsourcing and the tax break that corporations get to do

so, but this has yet to happen.

As long as I'm on this little rant, for those of you who don't know, or have become unsure, there is no "War on Christmas." I'm talking to you, Bill O'Reilly. For a department store, or even George W. Bush's Christmas cards, to say Happy Holiday's as opposed to Merry Christmas is not war, but understanding that we are also in the same season as Ramadan, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, the Solstice, and for my Buddhist friends, Bodhi Day. Really though, what else should we expect from a former tabloid journalist from *A Current Affair*? Have you ever asked yourself, where do they get these guys?

It would be unfair for me, of course, to label all pundits as full of steam, know nothing, glamorized tabloid journalists. There are some, indeed, who are genuinely doing their jobs in a respectable manner. Most however, are just entertainers trying to get ratings. As long as this is the case, you may as well get your news from guys like Jon Stewart, Steven Colbert, and Bill Maher. You'll probably run across better interviews and more intelligent debates, as well as more accurate information.

Is it too much to ask for someone to ask for a little journalistic integrity from the major media outlets in this country?

Misconceptions about climate change

By CHRIS VARMECKY
STAFF WRITER
CJV5043@PSU.EDU

"Environmentalism as a meta-physical ideology and as a world view has absolutely nothing to do with natural sciences or the climate itself," said Czech President Vaclav Klaus. Manifesting itself as the rallying cry for tree huggers everywhere, the issue of anthropogenic climate change in recent years has been catapulted to the forefront of the modern-day environmental movement.

Spanning the entire globe and amassing an enormous following (ranging from authoritative politicians to idealistic celebrities), the call to mitigate

impending environmental disaster is deafening to say the least. Ardent environmental crusaders contend that scientific evidence weighs heavily on their side.

While the pursuit of scientific truth is ever evolving and constantly self-correcting, the devout followers of the global warming movement maintain that this is not a debatable issue. They pigheadedly persist that those who challenge the validity of man-made climate change are heretics; some going as far as to equate skeptics with Holocaust deniers.

Through the successful utilization of fear mongering, instilling within the general public a false sense of justifiable urgency, environmentalists and

the far left have perpetuated what amounts to a brilliantly executed sleight-of-hand; the likes of which having more to do with mainstreaming liberal ideology and stifling capitalism, rather than saving the planet.

The theocracy of climate change is exactly that, a religion. The secret to its appeal lies within the self-satisfaction of the human condition. In taking up arms against an invisible enemy (i.e. carbon dioxide and gluttonous decadence), we feel good about ourselves, as environmentally conscious citizens who just want to preserve the planet from the dastardly actions of exploitive corporations.

Noble in thought, yet futile in practice; "going green," recycling,

and Obama's brainchild, cap-and-trade, amount to nothing more than a triviality in effecting the climate as a whole. However, the cap-and-trade proposals advocated by Obama and his cohorts in Congress have the potential to bring about further economic ruin to an already fragile financial landscape, if they are seriously implemented. In exposing these commonly held misconceptions for their true colors, we can effectively address the demagoguery of the environmental movement, separating scientific fact from their progressive ideology.

Misconception number one: rising temperatures are a direct result from the burning of fossil fuels, and humans, as the purveyors of

this utter disregard for the planet, can take measures to prevent further havoc wreaked upon the climate.

Although the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has some effect on global temperature, it is merely an insignificant dynamic in regards to the massive solar powerhouse that ensures life on earth. The 11 year intervals of solar minimums and maximums (i.e. solar activity exhibited by sunspots) are the foremost factor in effecting global temperatures. Recent years of perceived unprecedented warming can be directly linked to a state of grand

Please see **CLIMATE CHANGE**
on page 9