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June 15, 2016 | Log Cabin Democrat (Conway, AR) | Joe McGarrity; For the Log Cabin Democrat

During every presidential election that I can remember, Republicans have complained that there is a liberal bias in the media. In this column, I am going to claim that there is no liberal bias in major newspapers. Before you object, hold on and hear me out.

To tackle this issue, first assign an index number that ranges from 0 to 100 that measures a person's or a newspaper's degree of liberalness. A 100 means this person is very liberal, a zero means she is conservative, and a 50 indicates that we have a moderate on our hands.

A liberal bias would occur if a newspaper ran stories and editorials that were liberal enough to warrant an 85 index value when its audience is moderate, which would be characterized with an index value of 50. In this case, the newspaper is not accommodating the preferences of its customers, it is trying to impose its views on its audience.

Of course, this liberal newspaper may not last long — because an upstart newspaper, which is moderate, will have a wider appeal to the city's readers, and it could soon become the dominant newspaper in the city.

Many people accuse the New York Times of having a liberal bias. I wonder if these same people have ever been to New York City, which is a very liberal place. I think the people in New York City may be characterized with an index number of 90 in my measure of liberalness. Therefore, when the New York Times publishes articles and editorials that are liberal enough to be described with an index value of 90 on the liberal/conservative index, the newspaper is not biased. Instead, the Times is perfectly providing the people of New York with news slanted in a way that appeals to their sensibilities.

The explanation for why these newspapers are liberal but are not biased has two parts. First, most major cities in the United States are populated with liberal people. Consequently, the major newspapers are also liberal.

The second part of the story is that newspapers and other news organizations around the country rely on the New York Times and other major newspapers to break big stories and to point them to where the news is. Outside of the major cities, news organizations simply do not have the resources to uncover what the major newspapers can. For instance, a staff member of the Washington Post recently said that this paper would dedicate 25 reporters to investigate Donald Trump. The newspapers in Arkansas and elsewhere simply do not have these kinds of resources.

To illustrate, suppose a newspaper serves a moderate town that can be described with a 45 liberal index number. Since the newspaper cannot generate all of its own stories, it has to rely on papers like the New York Times for some of its stories. These Times stories may be 90 on the liberal index scale and seem unfair to the residents of the town. However, these complaints ignore the choice confronted by the local newspaper. It can report high quality news with a liberal slant produced by the Times or it can generate its own news with its very limited resources.

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