

ested in the history of American labor disputes. Norwood tells interesting stories, and he tells them well. He just doesn't interpret most of them correctly. □

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Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News

by Bernard Goldberg

Regnery Publishing • 2002 • 232 pages • \$27.95 hardcover; \$13.95 HarperPerennial paperback

Reviewed by John Hood

It has all been said before, by scholars and critics with greater knowledge of the subject, in books and articles that were better written and edited, in exposés more telling and explosive. The American news media, particularly the so-called "prestige press" comprising the broadcast networks and the major New York and Washington newspapers and magazines, are filled with a pervasive left-wing bias.

And yet, former CBS newsman Bernard Goldberg's light and fluffy book, *Bias*, spent several weeks atop the *New York Times* bestseller list. Perhaps that's the ultimate irony, for as Goldberg notes, the relatively simple-minded folk who produce network news tend to treat the *Times* as a combination of a crib sheet, a daily production memo, and the Bible.

I wanted to like *Bias*. I especially looked forward to it because of the event that led to its publication. In 1996 Goldberg wrote a devastating and insightful critique of a thinly veiled CBS screed by the clueless Eric Engberg against presidential candidate Steve Forbes's flat-tax proposal. I saw the Engberg piece. It was terrible, marred not just by ignorance of basic economic issues but even a contempt for them. Goldberg's piece, which ran on the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, was a refreshing admission of media culpability by someone who had spent

more than a quarter of a century as a television news reporter.

That piece almost got Goldberg fired. The delicious part of the story was that CBS, which made its reputation through investigative journalism and whistleblowers on programs like *60 Minutes*, proved itself completely intolerant of anyone blowing the whistle on its own nefarious practices. (Goldberg had pursued the bias issue with his superiors for years before writing the *Journal* piece.)

Eventually, the internal pressure and damage to his career forced Goldberg to take early retirement from the network. Soon afterward he landed a book contract. The result, however, falls far short of what one might have expected. Other than filling out, at excessive length, the details of the Engberg fracas, the book adds little new to one's understanding of why the mainstream news media fail to cover politics and public policy with evenhandedness. Because I have dealt with reporters on a daily basis and grappled with these issues personally for 14 years now, perhaps I am not giving Goldberg sufficient credit for breaking the news about media bias to a wider audience. What sounds familiar to me might seem revelatory to his readers. Only, I suspect not.

Moreover, the book is a poor exercise in writing. It repeats itself; it assails the senses with italics and exclamation points; and it flogs what is often only a middling joke so much that it surrenders any pretense at humor and becomes painful. Goldberg denies early on that the book is an attempt at revenge against his CBS tormentors. "Anyone who writes a book to be vindictive is almost certainly insane," he writes. But I think any objective reader would come to the conclusion that, in addition to the substantive issues that Goldberg does address, much of his book reads a lot like an extended session of score-settling.

It's not that I don't think Goldberg has legitimate scores to settle. Furthermore, once he leaves his personal story and delves into slanted media coverage of such issues as race, working mothers, homelessness, and other issues, he's largely on solid ground.

The prestige press does work from an ideological “script,” though as Goldberg correctly points out, it doesn’t reflect a conscious effort to deceive or an elaborate “liberal” conspiracy. The networks, the big newspapers, the newswEEKlies—they’re staffed with folks who pretty much came from the same places, went to the same schools and colleges, and share the same simpleminded, ’60s-era soft leftism that leaves little room for questioning their presuppositions or weighing various points of view.

I found *Bias* disappointing precisely because it could have been so much better. Goldberg relies heavily on work that has already been published by the Media Research Center, Center on Media and Public Affairs, and other familiar sources. He supplies lengthy quotes from *Commentary* essays and *Policy Review* articles that many of us read and digested years ago.

Furthermore, *Bias* would have benefited tremendously from endnotes, an index, or at least a bibliography.

Goldberg is a veteran of *television*; I mean no disrespect, but his breezy style and lack of scholarship aren’t surprising. What he needed was a good editor and a publisher’s commitment to quality. What he, and his readers, got from Regnery fell short of its usual level of work.

Still, *Bias* hit the bestseller list, Goldberg received tons of coverage (thanks to the new news sources offering competition to the prestige press), and the issue of media bias and what to do about it is getting the attention it has long deserved. □

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Locke, Jefferson and the Justices: Foundations and Failures of the U.S. Government

by George M. Stephens

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Reviewed by George C. Leef

Those of us who know the philosophy of the Founders and the long trajectory of our history understand that our nation began with a strong commitment to individual liberty and has been sliding into a collectivistic, authoritarian swamp ever since. But we are a tiny minority. Most Americans know little or nothing about the beliefs of the Founders (much less the *reasons* for those beliefs) and can’t imagine that Americans once lived without Social Security, minimum-wage laws, government schools, “wars” against poverty and drugs, and so on endlessly. Therefore, it is beneficial to have books that instruct readers about the limited-government concept of the Founders and how we have been steadily moving away from it.

Business consultant and economist George M. Stephens has written just that sort of book in *Locke, Jefferson and the Justices*. He gives the reader a clear exposition of the views of John Locke, then shows how Locke’s philosophy influenced the American patriots in their decision to break with the British crown. Then Stephens discusses the steady descent from the pinnacle of freedom to our modern condition of almost omnipotent government, with particular emphasis on the instrumental role played by the Supreme Court. He concludes on an optimistic note, arguing that Locke’s ideas on government are still just as sound now as they were when first written and that the Supreme Court has moved somewhat back toward a jurisprudence that protects Lockean rights.

To begin with, Locke forcefully argued that the purpose of government was nothing more than the protection of property. “The great and chief end, therefore, of men’s unit-

