

Chesterton: Newspapers are 'the hobbies of a few rich men'

If anything positive has come about from the 2016 presidential campaign season, it would be that the press has revealed its true character. Complaints abound from Americans of all stripes that "the media" is more interested in driving its own narrative than simply informing the public.

In his 1908 book *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton wrote about the dangers of the press. Indeed, his insights nearly match perfectly with what we see 106 years later.

...as a fact, men have almost always suffered under new tyrannies; under tyrannies that had been public liberties hardly twenty years before. Thus England went mad with joy over the patriotic monarchy of Elizabeth; and then (almost immediately afterwards) went mad with rage in the trap of the tyranny of Charles the First. So, again, in France the monarchy became intolerable, not just after it had been tolerated, but just after it had been adored. The son of Louis the well-beloved was Louis the guillotined. So in the same way in England in the nineteenth century the Radical manufacturer was entirely trusted as a mere tribune of the people, until suddenly we heard the cry of the Socialists that he was a tyrant eating the people like bread. So again, we have almost up to the last instant trusted the newspapers as organs of public opinion. Just recently some of us have seen (not slowly, but with a start) that they are obviously nothing of the kind. They are, by the nature of the case, the hobbies of a few rich men.

We have not any need to rebel against antiquity; we have to rebel against novelty. It is the new rulers, the capitalist

*or the editor, who really hold up the modern world. There is no fear that a modern king will attempt to override the constitution; it is more likely that he will ignore the constitution and work behind its back; he will take no advantage of his kingly power; it is more likely that he will take advantage of his kingly powerlessness, of the fact that he is free from criticism and publicity. For the king is the most private person of our time. **It will not be necessary for anyone to fight again against the proposal of a censorship of the press. We do not need a censorship of the press. We have a censorship by the press.***

... The chieftan chosen to be the friend of the people becomes the enemy of the people; the newspaper started to tell the truth now exists to prevent the truth being told.

And there Chesterton nails it. The greatest power of the press is not the ability to report a story, but rather the ability to refuse to report a story.

—

Dear Readers,

Big Tech is suppressing our reach, refusing to let us advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#) and Gab [@CharlemagneInstitute](#)!