

Media and propaganda

Media



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The strike at California State University, associated with allegedly low salaries of the staff has been covered by a number of masscommunicationmedia. The present paper is intended to compare the messages from different sources, analyze and find media biases and the elements of propaganda. As the preliminary results suggest, most articles are biased, and one of them emphatically urges Americans to support the action.

The first article in the scope, written by C. Arjentera and published in the Monterey County Star places accents and emphases in quite an unusual way. For instance, the article first and foremost describes the strike: “ The union has announced that a strike, which would be the first for our system, would be a series of two-day rolling actions that would move from campus to campus sometime in April or May. Eventually affecting all 23 – including CSU-Monterey Bay” (Arjentera, 2007, p. 5).

Furthermore, the author provides the criticism and claims of the dissatisfied faculty member who states that union is likely to decline after the introduction of the tradition of job actions. The paper also includes the local officials, but presenting their views, the article implicitly claims that the administration is merely concerned about the deterioration of education quality in the university, which might appear during the strike.

The true cause of the strike is presented only at the end of the article: “ Faculty and administrators agree CSU instructors are paid less than peers at comparable institutions in other states” (Arjentera, 2007, p. 5). As one can understand, the author seems to have kept in mind the features of human perception (the leading paragraph is most likely to be memorized) and

deliberately placed the negative messages concerning the strike and the perceived poor professionalism at the beginning, whereas the participants' problem are mentioned very briefly in the concluding chapter.

On the contrary, the article at NBC. com is much more neutral and contains neither positive nor negative propaganda. Its structure can be outlined in the following way: 1) a brief, but comprehensive idea about the strike; 2) the real extent of the problem (figures); 3) quotations of faculty members' statements; 4) administration's view on the problem and the statement of the need for compromise. The article seems to cover different views on the job action – from positively enthusiastic to extremely cautious, most importantly, there are real people, who stand beyond these messages: “ We don't understand why they feel they can't make some kind of reasonable offer to us”. – Canton says”; “ Well what about students? How do we make them competitive?

How do we make sure the faculty (is) competitive? It's not just about administrators”, said San Francisco Sen. Leland Yee” ([http://www. nbc11. com/news](http://www.nbc11.com/news), 2007). This means, the officials are in reality aware of the multiple sides of the situation and pay attention not merely to the strikers' manifested needs, defended through a degree of pressure, but also at the possible positive outcomes, rather than putting forth the claims like ‘ If we don't reach consensus, the quality of education will fall’, implied in the previous paper.

The official CSU site describes the event not merely as a PR-action, but as a pompous event: “ John Travis, the president of the California Faculty Association, called it “ a truly historic day” (Gavios, 2007). As one can
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understand, due to the fact that the web-page belongs to the university, it is supposed to highlight the subjective importance of the action for the staff, rather than in broader social context. Thus, the article describes the extent of the strike and its features – for instance, the author notes that the job action is not a traditional strike, as it doesn't infringe upon the students' interests and implies almost no withdrawal from work, merely walkouts and picketing.

The implicit message in this focus is understandable: the author tries to show how the strikers care about their learners and how successfully they combine their labor with the protest. Furthermore, the paper contains no opinions of state officials and administration, narrowing the focus to few union members and the possibility of the introduction of additional efforts, if the strike at this stage is fruitless. Although this article contains certain biases like shifting accents, it cannot be classified as propaganda, as it simply resembles a position statement and the extent of support the strikers have received.

The final paper I would like to analyze is the article by Leland Yee, which contains the elements of explicit propaganda and is performed in extremely emotional tone, which infer the senator's deep sympathy for the underpaid laborers: "It is no wonder the faculty at our state universities are voting in overwhelming numbers to go on strike. I, like many other legislators, students and taxpayers, share the faculty's frustration" (Yee, 2007).

The official completely consents to the participants' demands, moreover – restates them different times and argues that even the support from higher education network, which has doubled the teachers' salaries over the two

last years, nevertheless doesn't fill the income gap, when comparing professors from CSU and other universities. The basic message the article underlies is: ' Well-educated and professional staff should not be discriminated and discredited with low salaries'. The author finally encourages his audience to join the strike: " Please join us in bringing much needed transparency, accountability and public access to our institutions of higher education by supporting SB 190" (Yee, 2007)

As one can understand from this analysis, only one article contains no biases, which is the paper on NBC. com, whose author seems impartial, consistent and logical, as the article is structured very soundly: the first paragraph answers all vital questions like " When?", " Why?", " Where?", " Who else is involved?" (whereas Arjentera's and Yee's papers omit some of these questions in the first paragraph) ; in addition, the paper contains the fragments of opinions and standpoints, which are different in nature and tone. Arjentera's article contains too much words like " reject" or " refuse" as well as negative statements, pointing to the deficiencies rather than to goals and the possible steps towards compromise.

Moreover, it is written in quite pessimistic spirit: " Union leaders dispute that most teachers would actually receive that much and disagree over a merit pay proposal" (the concluding paragraph) (Arjentera, 2007, p. 5). Thus, the author implies that the action is to certain degree pointless. Yee's and Gavious's papers are explicitly optimistic, and both seem to take the strikers' side.

Although the latter paper is situated on CSU site, it doesn't contain any radical positions, but it can be declared as biased nonetheless, as the author

doesn't include the true impact of the strike on students and California state budget, yet he notes that the teachers will not miss many lessons. Yee's paper contains explicit propaganda and the promotions of the strikers' interests. Due to the fact that the author is the influential political figure, his request to support the participants is extremely strong in terms of its power over public consciousness.

In conclusion, I would like to post my recommendations for citizens, who wish to learn more about the events. NBC. com has appeared the most reliable and credible source, but I wouldn't like to advertise or promote it – in fact, to launch critical thinking, it would be enough to read or listen to the news from three-four different sources and think carefully not merely on the strike itself, but also consider its financial side and outcomes for the state budget as well as the possible improvement of education quality at the university.

Reference list

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