

Normative Theories of Press II

Soviet Media Theory

Soviet media theory is imitative of Leninist principles which based on the Carl Marx and Engel's ideology. The government undertake or controls the total media and communication to serve working classes and their interest.

Theory says the state have absolute power to control any media for the benefits of people. They put end to the private ownership of the press and other media.

The government media provide positive thoughts to create a strong socialized society as well as providing information, education, entertainment, motivation and mobilization.

The theory describes the whole purpose of the mass media is to educate the greater masses of working class or workers. Here, the public was encouraged to give feedback which would able to create interests towards the media.

According to authoritarian theory, the media controlled and censored by the ministries in the country but libertarian is fully free without any intervention of any authority or government, Soviet media theory, the whole control of the media is under the leader of the nation.

a) Direct governmental control of the media. Typical to predemocratic societies, where the government consists of very small ruling-class. b) No printing that could undermine the established authority or offense to existing political set up.

The theory to control media possessed following features: a) Closely tied to the communist ideology. b) The media is collective agitator, propagandist and educator in the building of communism. c) No private ownership of the media. d) The government is superior to the media institutions. e) The media is supposed to be serious. f) The soviet theory does not favour free expression, but proposes a positive role for the media, the society and the world. g) Press contributes to success of the state. h) Only legal party members can publish and no one can criticize party. i) Government has "influence" over the press. j) closely tied to a specific ideology—the communist k) media organizations in this system are not intended to be privately owned and are to serve the interests of the working class. l) both the soviet and the authoritarian acknowledge the government as superior to the media institutions. m) The mass media in the Soviet model are expected to be selfregulatory with regard to the content of their messages.

Important features of era: The government consists of a very limited and small ruling-class. Media are not allowed to print or broadcast anything which could undermine the established authority of the government.

This theory is derived from the ideologies of Marx and Engel that "the ideas of the ruling classes are the ruling ideas". It was thought that the entire mass media was saturated with bourgeois ideology. Lenin thought of private ownership as being incompatible with freedom of press and that modern technological means of information must be controlled for enjoying effective freedom of press. The theory advocated that the sole purpose of mass media was to educate the great masses of workers and not to give out information. The public was encouraged to give feedback as it was the only way the media would be able to cater to its interests. Under communist theories like soviet media theory, the journalist or press should support the leadership rather than a watchdog.

Social Responsibility Theory

This theory keeps certain areas free for the Press but at the same time puts lot of responsibility on media. Media is not just seen as an enterprise like others in the business sector of any society. But due to its unique nature, society expects a particular role which media must play in getting rid of social evils, educating people, criticizing government policies and exposing other wrong doings in a society. In mid 20th century most of the developing countries and third world nations have used this social responsibility theory of press which is associated with “the Commission of the Freedom of Press” in United States at 1949. In the book “Four theories of Press.”

The Hutchins Commission (Robert Hutchins - President of the University of Chicago) The commission was established as a response to criticism from the public and government over media ownership. After deliberating for four years, the Commission came to this conclusion in 1947: the press plays an important role in the development and stability of modern society and, as such, it is imperative that a commitment of social responsibility be imposed on mass media.

According to this social responsibility theory, the press has a moral obligation to consider the overall needs of society when making journalistic decisions in order to produce the greatest good. Though there had been journalism "codes of ethics" for decades, the Commission's report was considered landmark by some scholars; they believed it was a pivotal reassertion of modern media's role in a democratic society.

Social-responsibility theory was born at a time when large and powerful publishers were unpopular with the public, and when the public had a high degree of suspicions about the motivations and objectives of the press. The press had mushroomed into an unwieldy and powerful entity, and criticism of the Fourth Estate was widespread.

Critics contended that the media had monopolistic tendencies, that corporate owners were not concerned with the rights or interests of those unlike themselves, and that commercialization produced a debased culture as well as dangerously selfish politics.

Social-responsibility theory thus proposes that the media take it upon themselves to elevate society's standards, providing citizens with the information they need to govern themselves. It is in the best interest of the media to do this; if they do not, social theorists warn, the public will demand that the government regulate the media.

Social responsibility theory allows free press without any censorship but at the same time the content of the press should be discussed in public panel and media should accept any obligation from public interference or professional self regulations or both.

The theory lies between both authoritarian theory and libertarian theory because it gives total media freedom in one hand but the external controls in other hand.

The press ownership is private. The social responsibility theory moves beyond the simple “Objective” reporting (facts reporting) to “Interpretative” reporting (investigative reporting).

The total news is complete facts and truthful, but the commission of the freedom press stated that “No longer giving facts truthfully rather than give a necessary analysed or interpretative report on facts with clear explanations”.

The theory helped in creating professionalism in media by setting up a high level of accuracy, truth, and information. The commission of press council also included some tasks based on social responsibility of media, which are as follows:

Formulate the code of conduct for the press.

Improve the standards of journalism.

Safeguarding the interests of journalism and journalist.

Criticize and make some penalty for violating the code of conduct.

The theory allows: Everyone to say something or express their opinion about the media. Community opinion, Consumer action and professional ethics. Serious invasion of recognized private rights and vital social interests. Private ownership in media may give better public service unless government has to take over to assure the public to provide better media service. Media must take care of social responsibility and if they do not, government or other organisation will do.