

Washington polling games

by *L_Brent_Bozell*

It has become almost amusing, watching how the so-called "news" media are manipulating their own polls to keep the political weather sunny for their hero. The Washington Post kicked off President Barack Obama's European trip with the headline "Blame For Downturn Not Fixed on Obama." Of course, what was "fixed" was the poll itself.

They did the usual tricks for a more liberal sample of "public opinion" — they polled on the weekend and oversampled Democrats (36 percent Democrat, 25 percent Republican). By themselves, these things are shameless — but expected. And still that wasn't enough of a slant. Check out the way this question was asked by the Post pollsters.

"How much of the blame do you think [fill in the blank] deserves for the country's economic situation?" The choices were corporations, banks, consumers, the Bush team and the Obama administration. There's a built-in pro-Obama bias in there already: assigning blame to Obama for the current economy when he's been in office for nine weeks just seems harsh to most people. But just because they (correctly) don't blame him as the primary cause for our current woes, this doesn't mean for a second that the public endorses his "solutions," as the Post suggests.

But the Post questioners traveled beyond natural polling for politeness. They wanted to know why we fault these sectors. Is it the corporations "for poor management decisions"? Is it the banks, for "taking unnecessary risks"? Did consumers take on "too much debt"?

These are fair descriptions, I think we can say. But now check how they identified the problem when it was a politician: Should the public blame Bush for "inadequate regulation of the financial industry"? Or is Obama to blame for "not doing enough to turn the economy around"?

What kind of left-wing pollster wrote these questions? Is Obama "not doing enough"? We're being buried in trillion-dollar Obama proposals, and he should be faulted for "not doing enough"? How about the crazy idea that maybe, just maybe, he's doing too much? This question makes sense only if the goal is to assist Obama politically.

The Post drew the numbers they wanted: While every other politician and group was blamed "a great deal or a good amount" for the downturn by at least 70 percent in the poll, Obama was only blamed to that extent by 26 percent.

So Obama's trying to implement socialism at 120 miles per hour, and with a straight face, the Post

reported that 62 percent of those surveyed still see Obama as a "new-style Democrat who will be careful with the public's money," while 32 percent see him as an "old-style tax-and-spend Democrat." An accurate assessment by the Post would conclude that a) Obama's accelerated socialist policies make most conservatives pine for the good old days of "tax-and-spend Democrats" and b) 62 percent of the public has no idea what is going on in Washington – primarily because they rely on outlets like the Post for their "news."

Then there were poll questions that the Post editors didn't want on the front page – or even anywhere in the poll story by political reporter Dan Balz and pollster Jon Cohen. On the front page, Post readers saw the big news – a bar graph showing that 60 percent approve of how Obama is handling the economy. But if you look at the Internet and read the actual poll, there's another number the Post deliberately left out. Pollsters asked, "Do you approve or disapprove of the federal government's overall response to the economic situation?" Forty-nine percent said they supported the overall federal government response.

So who, boys and girls, is the "federal government? It's controlled by a Democratic president, and a strongly Democratic Congress. One could clearly state, then, that less than half of the public supports President Obama's economic agenda. But the Post ignored this so as to trumpet the opposite.

This is one important reason why newspapers are on shaky financial ground. Washington Post readers who are not completely on the Obama bandwagon should see the discrepancies described here and feel completely manipulated. The Post is loading on the bias, coming and going, manipulating the polls after it paints pretty presidential pictures on the front page.

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