

FEB 13, 2022

Debut

Thank you for reading the debut issue of *The Weekly Letter*! For a refresher on what this newsletter is all about, [click here](#).

News

- Land Defense: Members of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation have filed an official submission to the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [alleging that Canada is violating international law](#). Despite Wet'suwet'en opposition, the Coastal GasLink fracked natural gas pipeline is proceeding on territory that has never been ceded to the Canadian government. (Grist, 2/10)
- #MeToo: With broad bipartisan support, Congress has passed legislation ["barring the use of forced arbitration to address sexual assault and harassment claims in the workplace."](#) Forced arbitration has prevented survivors of sexual abuse from bringing lawsuits against their abusers to court. (NY Times, 2/10)
- Biodiversity: [How pollution is leading Florida's manatees to starvation](#). (Vox, 2/8)
- Ukraine: Ukrainian Olympian Vladyslav Heraskevych [displayed a sign reading "NO WAR IN UKRAINE"](#) following a run in the skeleton event. (NY Times, 2/10)
- Censorship: Legislation proposed in Florida [takes aim at LGBTQ+ topics in classrooms](#). If passed, the legislation would allow parents to sue school districts in which they believe a teacher broke the law. (BBC)

Opinion

- Bill McKibben and Akaya Windwood: [Older Americans have a key role to play in social movements](#). (NY Times, 2/7)
- Perry Bacon Jr: The U.S. won't become a dictatorship. But will it be a ["Multiracial Multicultural Social Fuller-Democracy" or a "White Christian Wealthy Male Semi-Democracy?"](#) (Washington Post, 2/9)
- Gal Beckerman: [The media in which radical ideas are expressed](#) affects the content of those ideas. (NY Times, 2/10)
- Ricardo Martner: President-elect Gabriel Boric of Chile should include [a commitment to progressive taxation](#) in a new Chilean constitution. (Al Jazeera, 2/12)


My View

Why read the news? Isn't it biased—or, worse, strewn with lies? My stance is that journalists are indeed biased because they are human. Nobody can escape their own subjectivity, and factors like social location and political sympathies do bias journalists. There are also institutional factors that bias news organizations, such as the attempt to turn a profit (for some organizations) or reliance on government funding (for other organizations). Some biases are inevitable. Others are more problematic and less excusable.

However, what separates the news from propaganda is that, by and large, principled news organizations do not spread outright lies and misinformation. Further, even as news necessarily comes filtered through the subjective lens of the reporter, there should be enough distance between facts and interpretation to allow those receiving the news to make their own political judgments.

The Weekly Letter will be broadly left-leaning. However, articles in the News section should allow you to make up your own mind, while the Opinion section will feature perspectives that I find *interesting*, not necessarily perspectives that I agree with. While I won't be sharing the opinions of fascists, for example, I will try to present a wide cross-section of views (although I admit that this week's articles are pretty lefty). Similarly, so long as you stay away from misinformation and hatred, I encourage everyone to share your own views in this newsletter.

Imagine sitting at a big table with friends and colleagues, reading newspapers, talking politics, and making the case for your take. That's what I hope this newsletter will feel like. To me, that's what engaging with the news feels like. It's what democracy feels like.

 Have some thoughts about a current event? Want to reply to an opinion article featured in the newsletter? To create a conversation about the news, all are encouraged to share their views. Just send your writing along with your name and where you're writing from to theweeklyletternewsletter@gmail.com



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Jamie Larson

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