

Pat Caddell – “The Audacity of Corruption”

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Speaker: Pat Caddell

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ROGER ARONOFF: —next is Pat Caddell. Pat Caddell is the founder of Cambridge Survey Research, a public opinion pollster, and an expert in analyzing public opinion. Many will recognize him from his frequent appearances on Fox News, and some of us—the older ones in here—will remember him from all the way back to the McGovern campaign. He also worked on the Carter campaign, for Gary Hart, for Joe Biden, and Jerry Brown. What some of you might not be aware of is that Pat Caddell also worked as a consultant to various movies, TV shows, and documentaries, most notably *Apocalypse Now*, *The West Wing*, on TV, and, most recently, to a documentary you may have seen the last couple weeks on Fox called *The Hope and the Change*. And without further ado, I’m going to welcome Pat Caddell.

PAT CADDELL: Thank you. Glad to be with you. This could take a long time, but we don’t have that, so let me just get right to this. I think we’re at the most dangerous time in our political history in terms of the balance of power in the role that the media plays in whether or not we maintain a free democracy or not. You know, when I first started in politics – and for a long time before that – everyone on both sides, Democrats and Republicans, despised the press commonly, because they were SOBs to everybody. Which is exactly what they should be. They were unrelenting. Whatever the biases were, they were essentially equal-opportunity people. That changed in 1980. There’s a lot of reasons for it. It changed—an important point in the Dukakis-Bush election, when the press literally was trying to get Dukakis elected by ignoring what was happening in Massachusetts, with a candidate who was running on the platform of “He will do for America what he did for Massachusetts”—while they were on the verge of bankruptcy.

Also the change from evening news emphasis to morning news by the networks is another factor that’s been pointed out to me. Most recently, what I call the nepotism that exists, where people get jobs—they’re married to people who are in the administration, or in politics, whatever. But the overwhelming bias has become very real and very dangerous. We have a First Amendment for one reason. We have a First Amendment not because the Founding Fathers liked the press—they hated the press—but they believed, as [Thomas] Jefferson said, that in order to have a free country, in order to be a free people, we needed a free press. That was the job—so there was an implicit bargain in the First Amendment, the press being the only institution, at that time, which was in our process of which there was no checks and balances. We designed a constitutional system with many checks and balances. The one that had no checks and balances was the press, and that was done under an implicit understanding that, somehow, the press would protect the people from the government and the power by telling—somehow allowing—people to have the

truth. That is being abrogated as we speak, and has been for some time. It is now creating the danger that I spoke to.

This morning, just this morning, Gallup released [their latest poll](#) on the trust, how much trust—the Congressman [Lamar Smith] made reference to an earlier poll—when it comes to reporting the news accurately, fairly, and fully, and it's the highest in history. For the first time, 60% of the people said they had “Not very much” or “None at all.” Of course there was a partisan break: There were 40% who believed it did, Democrats, 58% believed that it was fair and accurate, Republicans were 26%, Independents were 31%. So there is this contempt for the media – or this belief—and there are many other polls that show it as well. I want to just use a few examples, because I think we crossed the line the last few weeks that is terrifying.

A few weeks ago I wrote a piece which was called “[The Audacity of Cronyism](#)” in Breitbart, and my talk today is “The Audacity of Corruption.” What I pointed out was, that it was appalling that Valerie Jarrett had a Secret Service detail. A staff member in the White House who is a senior aide and has a full Secret Service detail, even while on vacation, and nobody in the press had asked why. That has become more poignant, as I said, last week, when we discovered that we had an American ambassador, on the anniversary of 9/11, who was without adequate security—while she still has a Secret Service detail assigned to her full-time, at a massive cost, and no one in the media has gone to ask why.

The same thing: I raised the question of David Plouffe. David Plouffe, who is the White House's Senior Advisor—and was Obama's campaign manager last time, he and [David] Axelrod sort of switched out, Axelrod going back to Chicago for the campaign—and just after it was announced that he was coming, an Iranian front group in Nigeria gave him \$100,000 to give two speeches in Nigeria. Now, let me tell you: There's nobody that hands—no stranger gives you \$100,000 and doesn't expect something in return, unless you live in a world that I don't. And no one has raised this in the mainstream media. He was on with George Stephanopoulos, on ABC, a couple of weeks ago, and they were going through all these questions. No one asked him whatsoever about that. He was not inquired. George Stephanopoulos, a former advisor to Bill Clinton—who every morning, while Rahm Emmanuel was Chief of Staff, had his call with Rahm Emmanuel and James Carville, and the three of them have been doing it for years—and he is held out as a journalist. He has two platforms. I mean, he's a political hack masquerading as a journalist. But when you don't ask the questions you need to ask of someone like David Plouffe, who's going in the White House—when we're talking about Iran. I just [finished surveys](#), some of you may have seen, with John McLaughlin this week, with [Secure America Now](#), and found out just how strongly Americans are concerned with Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, what's happening in the Middle East, and cuts in defense spending. This is not the place for that, but it strikes me as the American people identify, in the polling we've done over the last year, Iran as the single greatest danger to the United States. And here's a man who's being paid by an already named front group for that—for a terrorist regime, and is not asked about it, or queried about it!

The third thing I would say is that—then there's of course [National Security Advisor] Tom Donilon, who I know very well from years back, who I caused a little bit of a stir over a few months ago when I said he was the “leaker-in-chief.” I mean this ridiculous running around—“How did these secrets get out?”—when it is clear he has no credentials for foreign policy; who

has been in the White House; who was a political operative for Walter Mondale, Jimmy Carter, and others; who was known to have, in my opinion, to be just the most amoral person I know in politics; and who is using and orchestrating national security. In Mr. [David] Sanger's book [*Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power*], as a reviewer at [\[The New York Times\]](#) said, "The hero of this book, and the clear source of it, is Tom Donilon"—but let me just make a point. Neither does—and I would say this to the Congressman—"You know, all the Republicans have to do"—you know, I talk often about the "Corrupt Party" and the "Stupid Party," but the Stupid Party couldn't be stupider when it comes to things like this. They could have called Tom Donilon and other people down to the Congress, put them under oath, and asked them if they had leaked. Instead you have Eric Holder, who runs the most political Justice Department since John Mitchell—only in John Mitchell's administration we had Justice Departments that were so politicized and so corrupted by politics—and he appoints someone who gave two people to do a study on the leaks, sometime in the next century will come out, and one of them is a, was a contributor to Barack Obama when he was a state Senator. That's a really unbiased source! And the press, of course, won't look into this. It will not ask the question. But the Republicans could have called them down. Yes, the President could have extended Executive Privilege, but let him say "I will not answer that question, sir" on the question of "Did you leak these secrets that Dianne Feinstein, the Chairman, the Democratic Chairman, of the Senate Intelligence Committee said were endangering national security and American lives?" As she [said](#) when she read Sanger's book, "My God, every page I turn I learn something that I don't know!" I mean, these are serious matters but in Washington they're playful, and the press does not pursue any of them.

Peter Schweizer has done a study talking about corruption. 60%, or [80%](#)—it's closer to 80% I think, now—of the money given under the stimulus to green energy projects—the President and this administration's great project—has gone to people who are either bundlers or major contributors to Barack Obama. But nobody says a word. Of course Republicans don't raise it because in Washington, they simply want to do it when they get back in power. And, of course, the press doesn't because they basically have taken themselves out of doing their job.

When we see what happened this week in Libya—and when I said I was more frightened than I've ever been, this is true, because I think it's one thing that, as they did in 2008, when the mainstream press, the mainstream media and all the press, jumped on the Obama bandwagon and made it a moral commitment on their part to help him get elected in a way that has never happened, whatever the biases in the past. To give you an example of the difference, I'll just shortly tell you this: In 1980, when [Jimmy] Carter was running for reelection, the press—even though 80% of them, after the election, reporters said they voted for Carter over [Ronald] Reagan, or 70% percent of them, a very high percentage—they believed, so much, that the Carter campaign and the Carter White House had abused the Rose Garden against [Ted] Kennedy that they made a commitment, as they discussed, that they would not serve as the attack dogs on Reagan for the Carter White House because they thought it was unfair and they weren't to be manipulated. I totally disagree with their analysis, but that was when you actually had a press corps. Whatever their own personal feelings, they made judgments that were, "We're not going to be manipulated." This press corps serves at the pleasure of this White House and President, led by people like Ezra Klein and JournoList, where they plot the stories together. The problem here is that no one will name names.

But I want to talk about this Libyan thing, because we crossed some lines here. It's not about politics. First of all we've had nine day of lies over what happened because they can't dare say it's a terrorist attack, and the press won't push this. Yesterday there was not a single piece in *The New York Times* over the question of Libya. Twenty American embassies, yesterday, were under attack. None of that is on the national news. None of it is being pressed in the papers. If a President of either party—I don't care whether it was Jimmy Carter or Bill Clinton or George Bush or Ronald Reagan or George H. W. Bush—had a terrorist incident, and got on an airplane after saying something, and flown off to a fundraiser in Las Vegas, they would have been crucified! It would have been—it should have been the equivalent, for Barack Obama, of George Bush's "flying over Katrina" moment. But nothing was said at all, and nothing will be said.

It is one thing to bias the news, or have a biased view. It is another thing to specifically decide that you will not tell the American people information they have a right to know, and I choose right now, openly, and this is—if I had more time I'd do all the names for it—but *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or the most important papers that influence the networks, ABC, NBC, and, to a lesser extent—because CBS has actually been on this story, partly because the President of Libya appeared on [Bob Schieffer's *Face the Nation*] and said, on Sunday, while [U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.] Susan Rice was out—the U.N. Ambassador has no portfolio on this matter—lying, said of the Secretary—you know why, notice the Secretary of State wasn't out there doing this—was on national television, lying and promoting the White House line while the Libyan President, the very same moment, is saying "This is a premeditated attack." Nobody has asked that question. This morning—take a look at *The New York Times* this morning, it's a minor reference. Oh, *now* we've decided that it was a terrorist incident. But this is—that would have changed, that *should* change the politics.

This is not without accomplices, because the incompetence of the [Mitt] Romney campaign, which I said a week ago is the—my God!—the worst campaign in my lifetime, and the Republican establishment in general's inability to fight, has allowed these things to happen in part because they don't do it. But I want to go through two other quick points.

[Mohamed] Morsi and Egypt: The President of Egypt, we find out now, that his whole agenda has been getting the "Blind Sheikh" [Omar Abdel-Rahman], who's responsible for the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, out of jail. Prison. I've been told specifically, by a member of the intelligence community that the White House and State Department are negotiating that now. They have now come out and denied it, but [Morsi] comes out, that they ordered—he's the head of the Muslim Brotherhood! The American people know what they think of the Muslim Brotherhood: They are against them eleven to one, all right? And he's the president of the Muslim Brotherhood, giving \$2 billion to United States. He tells them—we had advance warning because they had said they were gonna do this, attack our embassy. The President—after the incident, after 48 hours, Mr. Morsi does nothing and says nothing—picks up the phone, calls him, and demands that they call it off. On Friday—last Friday, a week ago today—there was supposed to be a big demonstration. We thought that would be the big day—no, it disappeared, because Morsi called it off. But no press person has investigated this, just as no press person will go and ask the most obvious questions, when there are really good stories here, good media stories, and good news stories. They are in the tank and this is a frightening thing.

Another example has been the polling, which everyone wants to talk to me about. Look: There is no doubt that Romney is blowing an election he could not lose, and has done everything he can to lose it. But the bias, the polling, it's very complicated. Some of it is error, some of it is miscalculation, but some of it is deliberate, in my opinion—to pump up the numbers using 2008 base to give a sense of momentum to the Obama campaign. When I have polls that have the preference of Democrats over Republicans higher than it was in 2008, which was a peak Democratic year, I know I am dealing with a poll that shouldn't be reported. And yet they are being done, and they are being done with that knowledge and with that basis for some people, and the answer, as I said, some of it is incompetence, some of it is they just don't know, really know, how to handle it, and some of it is on purpose, and it's purposeful. But all of it is just to serve a basic point, just as JournoList was—Mr. Klein's JournoList—but as I said there is no pushback. We have a political campaign where, to put the best metaphor I can on it, where the referees on the field are sacking the quarterback of one team, tripping up their runners, throwing their bodies in front of blockers, and nobody says anything. The Republicans don't. The reason you will lose this battle is for one reason. Despite organizations like AIM and others who are pointing this out, and the fact that 60% of the American people are in on the secret here—I mean, they're no idiots—Republicans and those candidates who are not the candidates of the press refuse to call them out. If I were the Romney campaign I would've been doing this for months! I'd have been looking at individual reporters! I would be telling the American people, “They're not trying to stop me; they're trying to stop you! And they are here to do this!” And I would have made the press themselves an issue because, until you do, what happens is, they are given the basic concession of authenticity and accuracy, or that they are credible, by not doing that.

Now too many reporters, too many political people in the Republican party in this town, want to maintain their relationships with the press. This is how Sarah Palin got handed over to Katie Couric and to ABC before she was ready—because Steve Schmidt and others want to preserve their view, their relationships with the press. You know, people have their own agendas, and often it's not winning. But this not-pushing-back is a problem, and they don't do it. And, you know what this is a different era: The old argument of “You don't attack someone in the press”—or “You don't get in a pissing match with someone who buys ink by the barrel”—doesn't apply anymore. There are too many outlets, too many ways to do it, and the country doesn't have the confidence in the press that they once had.

But all I want to conclude to this is that we face a fundamental danger here. The fundamental danger is this: I talked about the defense of the First Amendment. The press's job is to stand in the ramparts and protect the liberty and freedom of all of us from a government and from organized governmental power. When they desert those ramparts and decide that they will now become active participants, that their job is not simply to tell you who you may vote for, and who you may not, but, worse—and this is the danger of the last two weeks—what truth that you may know, as an American, and what truth you are not allowed to know, they have, then, made themselves a fundamental threat to the democracy, and, in my opinion, made themselves the enemy of the American people. And it is a threat to the very future of this country if that—we allow this stuff to go on. We have crossed a whole new and frightening slide on the slippery slope this last two weeks, and it needs to be talked about. And so that's as much as I can do in twenty minutes. So then we—we have a few moments for questions. Yes, sir?

ARONOFF: Let's get a few questions here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER : Yes, I wanted to offer my interpretation for why this dynamic is happening. I'd like your reaction. I think that the media is working with the government, because the government hands out so many freebies—

CADDELL: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: —you know, for market share, and, therefore, they have to work in sync with them in order to ensure the good graces. I think, also, the advertisers who generate the revenue for the newspapers are also getting those freebies, and so they can then influence the media—

CADDELL: The corruption in this town is so great. Everybody in Washington seems to almost be on the take—with the exception of everybody in this room, and the assistants here. But, I swear to God, it's so—the idea that I should get something, you know—the reason, when you have firms that have Ed Gillespie in business with Jack Quinn, who was the counsel for Bill Clinton, and responsible for the pardon of Marc Rich, among other things, is because everybody in this—those people on K Street, in both parties, are about arrangements and money. Everyone in the press is. We have stimulus money being given. We have people who, as I said, the relationships, when people are making contracts, and their husbands and wives are getting—Jay Carney's wife works in the government! Now he works—he was the head of the *Time Magazine*! He was a liar then, and a liar now, apparently! You know—and nobody says there's anything wrong with this. And you're right: Everybody's on the take here, and everybody's cutting up their stock. That's why, what used to be one of the best and most important things for the press, which was the investigative journalism of corruption and money, the stealing of the taxpayers, the looting of the Treasury, isn't an issue, and why no one speaks of it in this town. Yes, sir?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: Pat, just a quick question. Is it in violation—can it be seen as a violation of their charter for the major networks to demonstrate such obvious bias? I mean, is that a violate their FCC license agreements?

CADDELL: Well, their license agreements only go to their stations. They don't really go to the networks themselves. But I—you see, that's why we're at this slippery slope. This is what scares me. Because you start saying, “Well, somebody should do something about this.”

My argument, when I speak to the press, is very simple: One day you're going to get my combination of George Wallace and Huey Long running for public office. He's going to get up and say how—he's going to point out “How the press is going to get me, and let me tell you what they're going to say about me, because they want to stop me,” and he's going to say, “You know what? We've gone too far with this First Amendment stuff. We need to make them serve the *people*.” We're sliding toward a system by establishing the fact that the press, in fact, has prostituted themselves in the service of a political party, or a political candidate, and once you go down this road and say, “That's happening,” then people say, “Why do we need a First Amendment? Why should we protect them? They're not protecting us.” That's the threat

here. That's the danger that I worry about, because we desperately need a real free press, whatever its faults, that protects the people. And soon, they will be owned by the people—we're getting very close to that. Watching the coverage of this stuff, in the last ten days, on Libya, and the press corps and the networks serving as nothing but offshoots of the White House Press Office, is really scary. We're going to get to this question, because that is down that road. These people are going to destroy freedom in America. I don't care about their partisan preferences, I care that, in the end of the day, somebody's going to say, "Enough of this!" And somebody will carry the day, and that'll be that. Yes, sir?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Thank you. You—thank you! Incredibly good twenty minutes! I agree with everything you said! I am very concerned about Romney's poor campaign, combined with the media bias the way it is. Is there anything that Romney can do at this point?

CADDELL: Well, he should've been out there already! He should've been out there pushing back—and so should the Republican establishment. The Republican establishment, as I said, in this town—I mean, all they seem to be in the business, to me, a lot of the establishment, is getting a lot of money to line their pockets, and not fighting or doing things that are effective. Why aren't they out there challenging this? Why isn't Romney himself getting up and saying, "I'm running against two organizations: I'm running against the Democrats and the President, and I'm running against the mainstream media, which will not tell you the truth"? Now let me tell you something: You want to liven up some of your rallies? That'll do it. But they don't do it because this man dares to be cautious. He's going to dare-to-be-cautious himself right out of a race that was his to lose, and he's losing it.

ARONOFF: One last question. Anybody? Go ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: Are there no patriots in the media who—

CADDELL: Oh, yes, there are! There are some.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: Do they not see where—

CADDELL: Well, the problem is—let me say this—because nobody raises the question, because no one raises from the viewpoint that I'm raising it from. To raise it from the viewpoint where Republicans or conservatives "We don't like what you're doing to us," only makes them dismiss that. What is not to be dismissed is what this is doing, and what it is in terms of the specifics of challenge. These individual reporters—let me tell you something about the press: Reporters become reporters and don't enter the political fray because, basically, they can't stand the heat. That's my experience. You ever watch reporters under attack in a public venue and so forth? They wilt like—they melt like ice on the equator. The fact is that they need to be called out. Their organizations need to be called out. Ezra Klein still writes for *The Washington Post*? I mean, this is unbelievable! They had a secret operation group, "Journo" group, online, coordinating how they would promote Obama, and how they would attack Republicans—and he's still there? But nobody calls out the publisher, or the editor, or whatever—there is no effort here—or calls him.

The fact is, if I were out there, if I were doing one of these campaigns, I wouldn't let one of these guys by with anything. I would make the fact that the American people, already expressed in the Gallup poll, say—I would give them all the evidence they need to confirm their beliefs. I would change the dialogue here. But until that happens, you're gonna have two teams—your whole team has an echo chamber of support—attacking you. How do you ever expect to win? Really? I mean, you can when it's the national tide, 1980. We have a different press now. They have now made the decision they will control the political process. They are serving—with the hundreds of millions of dollars that the networks and these newspapers are, in effect, contributing—in-kind contributions to candidates in the Democratic Party. That's the legal issue that I would have been exploring. I mean, I would begin to put the heat on.

But the Republicans never said a word. When Comcast, which bought out the administration—they're my cable company in Charleston, they're just so bad, I guess every cable company is awful, but they're the worst—buys a network, is allowed to buy a network—the Justice Department allowed this—no Republican stood up and said, “This should be stopped!” I mean, really! You get what you ask for. So, anyway, I've got to go. I've got to go do TV.

ARONOFF: Thank you very much.