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AN OBJECT LESSON IN WHY THE MEDIA LACK CREDIBILITY

A new high (or low, as you prefer) in media creation of artificial issues was reached in the advance reporting of the recent 93rd annual convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which they call their Continental Congress. It's a good lesson in how liberal bias, combined with the press' passion to predict the future instead of report the facts, can result in foolishness.

The day the DAR convention opened, Newsweek hit the stands with a page in its "National Affairs" section entitled "The DAR Faces a New American Revolution." Journalistic style decrees that the first sentence in any news report should tell the most important and newsworthy fact.

Newsweek's lead sentence in this article was: "By the time the Daughters of the American Revolution conclude their 93rd Continental Congress in Washington this week, the convention floor may be spattered with blue blood." In fact, the DAR convention concluded without any blood (blue, red or any other color) being spattered, literally or figuratively. The prediction was ridiculous.

Newsweek's second sentence continued, "In a most unladylike dustup, the organization's president general, Sarah M. King, is under attack from a group of younger revolutionaries." In fact, there was nothing "unladylike" about the convention; everybody behaved with perfect courtesy, and the possibility of DAR members behaving otherwise existed only in liberal reporters' imaginations.

Newsweek's first paragraph concluded with the terse, unqualified prediction, "Impeachment looms." Talk of "impeachment" had arised a couple of weeks earlier when one DAR member from Massachusetts called a news conference and announced that she planned a move to impeach Mrs. King and the present executive officers. Although this lone member does not hold any office in the 210,000-member organization, and does not have the support even of her own chapter, she confidently predicted that her impeachment campaign would gain momentum like a rock rolling downhill and that, by the time of the convention, it

would be the size of a "boulder." The liberal press reported her silly, unsubstantiated claims as though they were both important and true.

Newsweek concluded its article with this prediction: "The Daughters of the American Revolution are hardly in the mood for reconciliation. Their convention this week promises to make the Battle of Bunker Hill look like, well, a ladies' tea party."

Now let's look at what actually happened within hours after Newsweek was published.

The DAR Continental Congress convened for business on Tuesday morning, April 17. After opening formalities, the president general, Mrs. King, who was presiding, ordered the house lights dimmed. The delegates and alternates were then shown, without any editing, a film of the entire news conferences held by the woman who threatened impeachment and by another member who had filed suit against the DAR about a cookbook.

At the end of the film showings, without comment or debate, the chair announced that it was ready to accept a motion for the impeachment of the executive officers. What followed was a dramatic, thunderous silence. Not a single one of the 2,009 delegates attending from the 50 states approached a single one of the floor microphones anywhere in the hall to move for impeachment.

After it was clear that no motion would be offered, a delegate moved a vote of confidence in Mrs. King, which was overwhelmingly approved with no audible dissent, accompanied by enthusiastic and sustained applause.

Where was Newsweek's blood on the convention floor? Or impeachment? Or battle that could be compared with Bunker Hill? The DAR meetings continued all week at Constitution Hall in Washington, and not one word was spoken that could be described as unladylike.

Washington newspapers failed to describe the drama of what happened, reporting merely that "impeachment failed." That terminology would have been accurate if an impeachment motion had been made, heatedly debated, and then failed by a vote of 1,005 to 1,004.

But what happened was quite different. When not a single delegate rose to make a motion of impeachment, that was a most unusual demonstration of unanimity among women.

The recent spate of publicity about the DAR (of which Newsweek is a typical example) has been an orchestrated attack by the liberal media based on bias and false charges rather than on facts. The big loser is the credibility of the media.