Abdicating freedom

“Let the people know the facts, and the country will be safe.” — Abraham Lincoln

The real-time reaction to the first debate tells it all: Stunned journalists who could not believe how badly Obama's liberalism was routed by a presidential Romney.

Done.

Why hasn't the story been about Obama's underperformance? Under 50% as an incumbent usually means that the incumbent is in big trouble. Crickets chirp.

The real-time reaction to the first debate tells it all: Stunned journalists who could not believe how badly Obama's liberalism was routed by a presidential Romney. They did not report the story as much as they made Obama's points for him. When the unemployment rate dropped to 7.8%, the media eagerly changed the subject. For one month out of 44, the rate ticked below 8%. Interpretation: Obama's policies successful! (Forget that Obama promised unemployment under 5.5% by now, and that many indicators, including actual labor force numbers, point to a slowing economy.)

Longer term, a press that is reduced to serving as a discredited arm of the Democrat Party undermines democracy.

Yet that is what is perceived to be happening. A September Gallup poll found that 60% of respondents—an all-time high—had "little or no trust in the mass media to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly." In a Pew poll, the New York Times' "believability" dropped 13 points from 2004 to only 49%.

People are increasingly filtering news to validate their own views. The "free" press is contributing to our polarization. If
Continued from page A4

the public tunes out, how will the public stay informed?

Democratic pollster Pat Caddell says that the media have crossed a “dangerous” line and are now sitting on stories and distorting facts to support the government (well, Obama). Think about the coverage on Libya, Afghanistan, and Fast and Furious. Would these scandals be ignored if the President was a Republican, or named Bush?

Journalist Charles Kuralt of Sunday morning fame said, “The one thing that’s worse than hearing about all that violence and all that bad news on television is not being permitted to hear it.”

James Madison (who wrote the First Amendment) was more explicit: “A people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with power which knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both.”

You won’t hear that on NBC.

Cory T. Wilson of Madison is an attorney with the firm of Heidelberg Steinberger Colmer & Burrow. To contact Cory, email cory@corywilson.ms.