

Olbermann has bias? Really?

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By Michael Costello for the Tribune

Commentary

MSNBC's premier political commentator, Keith Olbermann, is a Democratic partisan? Who knew? Until I read last week that Olbermann had donated to the campaigns of three Democrats, including one to whom he had just provided a lengthy stretch of free air time before writing the check, I never would have guessed that he favored Democrats.

Sure, friends and fans send me YouTube clips of Olbermann's spittle-flecked rants against conservatives and Tea Partiers and anyone else whom he deems ideologically impure. But the people who send them wouldn't send me clips of Olbermann criticizing liberals because that would spoil the narrative. I have no doubt that my conservative friends, like the mainstream news media, turn a blind eye to news that contradicts their preconceptions. And the conservatives' preferred narrative of Olbermann paints the man as a bigoted caricature who suffers from a rare immune disorder that causes Tourette Syndrome-like outbursts whenever he is exposed to a philosophy even slightly to the right of Kim Jong Il's. According to this narrative, the only difference between Olbermann and North Korea's Dear Leader is that Kim Jong Il kills those who offend him, while Olbermann simply smothers them with juvenile insults. And if they really make him mad, he condemns them as the "worst person in the world."

Sure, Olbermann once called conservative columnist Michelle Malkin a "big, mashed-up bag of meat with lipstick." But I have no doubt that the man who fancies himself a modern-day reincarnation of Edward R. Murrow casts similar high-brow, intellectual aspersions on the Maureen Dowds of the world as well.

According to Politico, Olbermann's crime was that NBC News "policies and standards" requires that its on-air personalities avoid "potential conflicts" that could compromise their status as "impartial journalists."

Don't laugh. That's what it actually says.

And even if Olbermann did make donations to left-wing Democrats, how could that possibly run afoul of NBC's supposed journalistic ethics? By law, donations to candidates are limited to \$2,400 per election cycle. I don't know how much MSNBC charges for advertising on its network, but I'm confident that it's considerably more than \$7,200 per minute. And considering that MSNBC is nothing but a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-per-week, 52-week-per-year disinfomercial for the extreme left wing of the Democratic Party already, Olbermann's donation would scarcely purchase more than a few pixels of the in-kind donation that MSNBC already provides to the far left.

It's not as though NBC's political sympathies were not already well known. NBC/Universal is owned by General Electric. And General Electric has bet its future on expensive "green technologies" that no one would ever buy unless forced to do so by the federal government. And there's only one major political party inclined to force consumers to purchase GE's wares. They are known as Democrats. So it's hardly surprising that GE would deploy its propaganda division to advocate for the political party that is essential to its viability. What's laughable is that it would simultaneously claim to uphold

journalistic ethics such as impartiality.

Like Rick Sanchez of CNN, Olbermann's exile from his cable network is notable, not just for what provoked the suspension, but for what did not bring down the wrath of the gods upon each of these men. Sanchez was frequently inaccurate and always inane. But he didn't get fired for being an inexhaustible fount of misinformation. He was fired for claiming that he was the victim of a Jewish cabal.

And let's look at some of the things that Olbermann did not get fired for.

At least once, Olbermann promoted the notion that former football player and Army Ranger Pat Tillman was assassinated, most likely on the orders of the Bush administration, because he opposed the Iraq War.

Olbermann invited crackpot Seymour Hirsch onto his show to advance the idea that former Vice President Dick Cheney had his very own death squad.

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow recently accused a sitting Republican congressman of complicity in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and she still has a job. And just a few days ago, a sympathetic Dylan Ratigan lent his show to lunatic Ted Toles to use as a platform for advocating violent revolution.

This is the sort of responsible, impartial journalism that Olbermann supposedly compromised by donating money to Democrats. Who do they think they're kidding?

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