

Dispatches from the Culture Wars

Thoughts From the Interface of Science, Religion, Law and Culture

Fox Pushes the Soros Boogeyman

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I found [this article](#) on the Fox News website rather amusing. It breathlessly reports that right-wing boogeyman George Soros "has ties to over 30 major news organizations." By "has ties," of course, they mean that someone who works for those outlets has met someone who has met someone who might have worked for a group that Soros once gave money to. I especially found this part interesting:

The investigative reporting start-up ProPublica is a prime example. ProPublica, which recently won its second Pulitzer Prize, initially was given millions of dollars from the Sandler Foundation to "strengthen the progressive infrastructure" - "progressive" being the code word for very liberal. In 2010, it also received a two-year contribution of \$125,000 each year from the Open Society Foundations. In case you wonder where that money comes from, the OSF website is www.soros.org. It is a network of more than 30 international foundations, mostly funded by Soros, who has contributed more than \$8 billion to those efforts.

The ProPublica stories are thoroughly researched by top-notch staffers who used to work at some of the biggest news outlets in the nation. But the topics are almost laughably left-wing. The site's proud list of "Our Investigations" includes attacks on oil companies, gas companies, the health care industry, for-profit schools and more. More than 100 stories on the latest lefty cause: opposition to drilling for natural gas by hydraulic fracking. Another 100 on the evils of the foreclosure industry.

Throw in a couple investigations making the military look bad and another about prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and you have almost the perfect journalism fantasy - a huge budget, lots of major media partners and a liberal agenda unconstrained by advertising.

So despite the author's own admission that ProPublica's stories are "thoroughly researched by top-notch staffers," the mere fact that they received funding from an organization that received funding from Soros is enough, in their mind, to discredit the group. Notice that there isn't even a whisper of a mention that any story done by ProPublica is inaccurate or slanted, only that they address topics that the right wing doesn't like. Apparently, accuracy and good journalism don't matter, only ties to Soros matter.

This is pure demagoguery. The notion that anything that can be tied, however indirectly, to Soros must be compromised and inaccurate is simply nonsense. So is the notion that just because an organization has received funding from one of Soros' many foundations,

that gives Soros control over what they write or advocate or means that everything that group does must be in line with Soros' political views.

I am one of those people who can be easily shown to "have ties" to Soros (I work for an organization that once received funding from him but no longer does). And yet I have bashed almost daily the president he spent so much money to support in 2008 since the moment he took office. Anyone who really thinks that I am influenced even the tiniest bit by those "ties" to Soros is living in a fantasy world.

The same goes for much of the demonization of the Koch brothers. Criticize them all you want for their political views, I certainly do. But don't pretend that just because some group received funding from them, everything they advocate is therefore held hostage to the Koch's financial interests and political views. They've funded both the Reason Foundation and the CATO Institute, both of which have done incredibly important work on a huge range of issues that the left should applaud -- opposing the expansion of executive power, warrantless wiretaps, torture, rendition, supporting the 4th amendment (not to mention the 1st), opposing foreign military adventures, calling for a reduction in defense spending, fixing our toxic criminal justice system, and much more.

None of those issues helps the Koch brothers' bottom line in any way and some of it may well hurt their bottom line. So the mere fact that one can point to such "ties" is not a substantive argument against the truth or validity of the positions those groups take, or the journalism an organization produces, and so forth. If Soros' funding of ProPublica is a problem, then show examples of ProPublica doing bad journalism. And good luck finding some.