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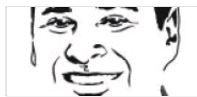
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U.S. OPINION



DAVID FRUM

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The conservative media's pay-for-play deals

Want better coverage on talk radio? Buy it

POSTED ON JUNE 15, 2011, AT 3:54 PM

Regular listeners to the Rush Limbaugh program will rarely, if ever, hear the broadcaster cite the work of the American Enterprise Institute. Or the Cato Institute. Or the Manhattan Institute. Or other right-of-center think tanks.

The rival Heritage Foundation does, however, get frequent and favorable mention on the most popular conservative talk show in America. In part, Heritage owes this attention to [Limbaugh's genuine admiration](#) for the institution:



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"There were a lot of people who nobody ever heard of who were responsible for people like me all over the country amassing and acquiring knowledge that's not available in a classroom anywhere, or not very many classrooms, and then being able to explain it to people who have not been able to access that information. These are academics, people that work at think tanks, laboring in the basements in anonymity, writing, researching, publishing so that people like me — I include Mr. Buckley, but he was well known — but there are all kinds of people who were producing brilliant things, research, opinion pieces that I was able to access, and I was an omnivorous and voluminous reader when it came to public policy and current events and history and things.

"One of the places that was invaluable to me in acquiring a bedrock or foundation, understanding of conservatism — and Mr. Buckley was one, of course, and Ronald Reagan — but the Heritage Foundation, and to this day we quote work that comes out of the Heritage Foundation ..."

But there's another reason that Heritage gets such unique and favorable treatment on the Limbaugh program. It pays for it.

Politico reports:

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"The Heritage Foundation pays about \$2 million to sponsor Limbaugh's show and about \$1.3 million to do the same with Hannity's — and considers it money well spent.

"We approach it the way anyone approaches advertising: Where is our audience that wants to buy what you sell?' Genevieve Wood, Heritage's vice president for operations and marketing. 'And their audiences obviously fit that model for us. They promote conservative ideas and that's what we do.'

"Last month, in the midst of a [flurry of scrutiny](#) of GOP presidential candidates' stances on health insurance [mandates](#) similar to one included in the 2010 Democratic health-care overhaul, Limbaugh took to the airwaves to defend Heritage's past support for such a proposal.

"The Heritage Foundation to this day says they are being impugned and misrepresented in terms of their advocacy for such a thing,' [Limbaugh said](#), explaining that the venerable think tank 'abandoned the idea once they saw it implemented' and realized 'it doesn't work.'"

(Read the whole *Politico* story [here](#).)

Understand: We are not talking about commercials, separated from the main flow of editorial content. Heritage work is embedded and inserted directly into the editorial flow of the Limbaugh program, as if selected without regard to the money paid.

Also understand: It's not just Limbaugh, and it's not just Heritage.

The relationships between radio hosts and their ideological sponsors... are habitually presented in ways that blur the bought-and-paid-for character of the promotion and endorsement.

Heritage pays for similar treatment on Sean Hannity's radio program.

FreedomWorks pays for mentions on the Glenn Beck show. Americans for Prosperity pays to be promoted on Mark Levin's show. The endorsements often obscure the paid-for nature of the broadcaster's endorsement.

Ditto for the relentless advocacy of gold purchases by almost every radio host.

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EDWARD MORRISSEY

Dump the debates

CNN's silly, pointless presidential debate wasted GOP candidates' time — and insulted Americans' intelligence

DANIEL LARISON

The West's helplessness in Syria

The U.S. should ignore calls from Congress and the media to take action against Bashar Al-Assad's bloody crackdown, because sadly, there's nothing we can do

ROBERT SHRUM

Is Obama's re-election bid really in trouble?

Forget the noisy declarations about lousy economic news

18 CommentsSORT BY: **OLDEST** NEWEST

Point? You act like we never knew, or it was denied by someone? At least they are getting paid, but Hollywood producers denied their bias in non political shows for years with no concern.

Posted by JR, 2011-06-15 17:17:13

Point? That David is so much smarter and more ethical than everybody else. This from a Canuck that made his whole career on one phrase in a Presidential speech. Rush masterfully blends beds and think tanks into his commentary and his listeners are smart enough to recognize it and his genius. And yes, he gets paid for it, but not nearly what it's worth on his program.

Posted by Gaucho Tche, 2011-06-15 18:10:46

DF the jerk....why don't you do some reporting on the one who said he would ...fundamentally transform America...., you POS.

Posted by Steve, 2011-06-15 18:26:06

Your point being what exactly? Everyone know Hannity, Beck and Limbaugh are conservatives, they don't try to hide. Neither does the Heritage foundation, but the 94 or registered democrat journalist, say they are not bias in their reporting, but try to destroy someone like Palin. Come on David?

Posted by angeloz, 2011-06-15 18:34:08

Everywhere else this is called product placement. It is the cost of production. The fact is no one on this planet expects these shows to be unbiased. So the fact that they are sponsored by a think tank that is unbiased, should not be surprised, Feeding company into the program goes back to Texaco and Ivory soap on television back in the 1950s.. This is really no big deal.

Posted by vince dc, 2011-06-15 18:40:22

Why are the CATO Institute or the American Enterprise Institute not mentioned Frumbles? Because YOU say so? PFFFT.They are mentioned nearly every day and cited when relevant. Like any other liberal (closet or otherwise) merely that you say something does not make it so.

Posted by Traveler, 2011-06-15 18:50:33

Do you seriously mean to say that this is a part of Conservative talk radio only? Do you ever listen to Liberal talk radio--such as it is--or to NPR--such as IT is? Did NPR get \$1M from Soros? Was that a unique event? This writer has tunnel vision, to say the least.

Posted by Bob, 2011-06-15 18:56:39

People on the right, unlike on the left, are not imbeciles. We know exactly what Rush Limbaugh is doing, and why. He's weaving his advertisement into the natural flow of his show so that it doesn't stick out as an advertisement. But, of course, this is obvious. We don't need some putative rightie-turned-leftie to tell us what's going on.And the reason Limbaugh does this---hold your breath---is to make money. Oh my, what a concept. So, as to your three theories, the answer, as should have been obvious from the start, is capitalism.

Posted by Lino D'Ischia, 2011-06-15 19:24:24

What a ridiculous column! Talk radio hosts are not journalists and do not pretend to be. Nobody listens to Rush to get the news. Rush, Hannity, etc. are advocates of the conservative philosophy and they proudly state this constantly. The difference is that liberal/progressive news shows claim to be unbiased and yet advocate just as vociferously as conservative talk radio, but they try to hide their intentions. Mr. Frum is a very good example of this.

Posted by Rob J, 2011-06-15 19:56:02

sinking Obama's re-election. The president is still on track for a second term



TISH DURKIN

Anthony Weiner and the 'ewww' factor

The real lesson of "Weinergate" is that we will never learn our lesson about politicians on the prowl



BRAD DELONG

Washington's deficit-hawk pretenders

Even if the GOP's spending cuts are larger than Obama's, they would fritter away the proceeds on tax cuts and repealing health-care reform



WILL WILKINSON

Bradley Manning's guilt — and ours

The accused leaker to WikiLeaks appears to have acted out of idealism. Now that we've seen the results of our wars, can we say the same?

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Wow, I guess it shows my naivete when it comes to the conservative willingness to be manipulated, but I honestly did not expect people to say that they don't mind organizations buying the position as the voice of conservatism as though they were not competing bodies.

Posted by Spike, 2011-06-15 20:08:59

Wow, I am impressed by the anger and refusal to seriously consider the criticism offered by this column. In these comments defending the conservative approach to news and politics, people are dangerously unwilling to look at their own party critically, and seem more interested in bickering.

Posted by Pam, 2011-06-15 20:47:46

I think the point being made is that both conservative and liberal viewpoints are simply up for sale. Not really news. The devil has them both in his pockets.

Posted by Shott, 2011-06-15 21:09:34

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