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Opinion

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## The 'conservative corporation,' Part II

By: [Timothy P. Carney](#)

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Michael Cannon of Cato sent me the picture at right, snapped in Seattle. The bumper sticker reads, "The media are only as liberal as the conservative businesses that own them."

This is the [second time](#) I've come across this argument -- an attempt by liberals to dismiss the claim of liberal media bias without having to wade into the content. Keith Olbermann last week [asserted](#), "The media which is, after all, owned by corporations naturally leans to the right. Corporations, by definition, lean to the right, towards the status quo."

It really makes you wonder what some liberals -- such as that bumper-sticker maker, its owner, and Olbermann -- mean when they use the word "conservative."

Maybe they just mean it as a slur: Olbermann and the bumper-sticker owner dislike pro-lifers, they dislike free-market types, and they dislike corporations.

Maybe by "conservative," Olbermann and his ilk mean "people who believe in the legitimacy of profit or, alternatively, earn profits."

Perhaps these liberals just call everyone who wears a suit "conservative."

I wouldn't call corporations "liberal," but I can easily find many standards by which the big media corporations are more fairly called liberal than conservative.

Last week [I covered](#) Olbermann's current corporate employer, General Electric, which has a lobbying agenda that hews very close to Obama's agenda and political action committee donations that favor Democrats. Looking at Olbermann's [future employer, Comcast](#), there's a similar pattern.



Photo by Michael Cannon in Seattle, Christmastime 2009

While Comcast and Obama are on different sides of the Net Neutrality debate, Comcast's CEO recently [sided with Obama](#) in backing the Senate health-care bill. The company's PAC contributions so far this cycle [favor Democrats](#) 58% to 42%, which, being approximately proportionate to the partisan breakdown of Congress, doesn't signal a pro-Democrat leaning, but it debunks the idea of a pro-Republican leaning. In 2008, Comcast's PAC [favored Democrats 60%-40%](#).

What about Olbermann's former employer, the Walt Disney Company, which owns ABC? It's PAC is a little bit closer to middle, [favoring Republicans 52-48](#) so far this election (although, the top recipient is liberal Sen. Pat Leahy), and last cycle [favoring Democrats](#) by the same ratio.

The PAC for AOL Time Warner, which owns CNN and AOL, among others, has [backed Democrats about 60-40](#) in each of the last two elections.

I won't catalogue the whole corporate media world, but I'll bet that for every Rupert Murdoch, there's a Ted Turner. Assigning political ideologies -- especially "conservative -- to corporations seems a silly undertaking.

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