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New York Times Jumps on Arrest of ACORN 'Pimp' - Yet Waited 6 Days to Report ACORN Revelations

By CLAY WATERS

From the Media Research Center

When the ACORN scandal broke, the New York Times dragged its feet for six days before issuing a story on the devastating footage from conservative activist and guerilla film-maker James O'Keefe, who caught on video the left-wing housing group giving advice to a "prostitute" and "pimp" on how to shelter illegal income from taxes.

But following Tuesday afternoon reports of the Monday arrest of O'Keefe for attempting to tamper with the phones of Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu, the Times wasted no time issuing a story for Wednesday's print edition.

BigGovernment.com caused a web sensation September 10 posting hidden camera footage from conservative activist and guerilla film-maker O'Keefe, who along with "prostitute" Hannah Giles visited several branches of the Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now and received advice on how to shelter their illegal income from taxes.

But the first story from a Times reporter on ACORN to see print came six days later, with Scott Shane portraying the scandal in purely political terms, with no outrage over a tax-funded leftist organization with connections to the Census Bureau and IRS encouraging tax evasion and child prostitution.

By contrast, the Times quickly jumped on O'Keefe's Tuesday arrest in a story, datelined New Orleans, gathered up by Campbell Robertson, Liz Robbins, and Jim Rutenberg, "4 Arrested In Plotting On Phones Of Senator."

Federal officials charged four men on Tuesday with plotting to tamper with the telephone system in the New Orleans office of Senator Mary Landrieu, Democrat of Louisiana. One of the men was a conservative activist who gained fame last year by secretly recording members of the community group Acorn giving him advice on how to set up a brothel.

All four of the men arrested Monday in New Orleans, each in his mid-20s, were charged with entering federal property under false pretenses with the intent of committing a felony, according to the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana. They appeared in court on Tuesday, and a preliminary hearing was scheduled for Feb. 12.

If convicted, the four would face sentences ranging from a fine to 10 years in prison.

The political activist was James O'Keefe, 25, who has gained renown in conservative circles by poking fun at the left through pranks and undercover video. In the Acorn videos, Mr. O'Keefe and an associate, Hannah Giles, posing as a pimp and a prostitute, secretly filmed themselves seeking and receiving financial advice for a brothel from Acorn workers.

The Times really dug into O'Keefe's latest investigation, even tracking down conservatives who had dared say approving things of O'Keefe's ACORN investigation, to get their response to the new allegations.

The Times solicited quotes from the "conservative Power Line blog, which frequently carried posts lauding Mr. O'Keefe and Ms. Giles" as well as a CATO institute scholar who dared to write a favorable op-ed about O'Keefe in The Washington Times.

And does the following paragraph have enough "conservative" labels in it?

Mr. O'Keefe's Acorn videos won credit from several quarters for drawing attention to long-held conservative suspicions about the group, and conservatives praised him as catching many news organizations asleep on a major story. "I thought the set of capers regarding Acorn was a kind of '60 Minutes' undercover-exposé -- going where '60 Minutes' fears to tread," said Scott W. Johnson, a co-founder of the conservative Power Line blog, which frequently carried posts lauding Mr. O'Keefe and Ms. Giles.

Speaking of Mr. O'Keefe's arrest, Mr. Johnson said, "It sounds like it was another kind of journalism project, maybe a misguided one -- I'm open minded -- but there's so little information it's impossible to say anything intelligent about it."

In September, Richard W. Rahn, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, wrote a column in The Washington Times hailing Mr. O'Keefe and Ms. Giles as technologically savvy, "smart amateurs" who "with courage and good judgment are becoming effective investigative journalists."

Mr. Rahn said Tuesday that he did not have enough information on Mr. O'Keefe's arrest to offer a different assessment.

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