

A Tale of Two Online Giants

Wales' Wikipedia vs. Elon's Twitter



by Bruce Bawer

There are few more elaborate examples of the contemporary leftist capture of institutions than the metamorphosis of Wikipedia, the most comprehensive and influential encyclopedia in human history and the seventh most frequently consulted website on earth, from a relatively objective source of information into a massive assemblage of progressive agitprop. When it was founded in 2001 by two self-styled libertarians, Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, Wikipedia – which is currently based at 120 Kearny Street, San Francisco, just off Market Street – was a self-consciously noble enterprise, conceived as a benign collaboration among unpaid volunteers and solemnly committed to truth and neutrality. In a 2021 [interview](#), Sanger recalled that during its first few years, Wikipedia's articles, even on the most controversial politicians and issues, were models of balance.

No more. “Especially over the last five years or so,” lamented Sanger, “Wikipedia has changed” although theoretically anyone can rewrite a Wikipedia entry to eliminate bias, left-wing

administrators and editors labor endlessly to prevent and undo such changes. Sanger noted that the entry for Joe Biden, for example, mentions “very little by way of the concerns that the Republicans have had about him”; although there’s a paragraph about the Ukraine scandal, it “reads like a defense counsel’s brief.”

But don’t dare to call Wikipedia biased. To do so is “incorrect.” Wikipedia itself [says so](#), in an emphatic little essay that lays down its party line on this question. It’s not possible for Wikipedia to be biased, you see, because it draws “only on reliable sources” – a “methodology” that ensures it will contain only “knowledge that is verifiable.” And what are those “reliable sources”? Well, on Wikipedia you can find an exhaustive [list](#) of sources in which it meticulously separates the sheep from the goats. And to peruse that list is to see news outlets being judged not, as Wikipedia would have you believe, by journalistic professionalism, but rather by the degree to which they can be relied upon to put a progressive spin on the facts.

Among the media receiving Wikipedia’s mark of approval – a green check mark inside a green circle – are ABC News, Al Jazeera, CBS News, NBC News, *The New Republic*, *New York*, *The New Yorker*, NPR, Politico, and *Time*. Those marked as “generally unreliable” – a red circle with a red line through it – include the Federalist and Post-Millennial. Project Veritas, which until the recent departure of James O’Keefe was arguably the most impressive and consequential investigative news outfit on earth, also gets the red circle.

Those media that are labeled (even worse) as “deprecated” – symbolized by a red stop sign with a hand inside it, signaling “stop!” – include Breitbart, the Daily Caller, the *Daily Mail*, the *Epoch Times*, Front Page, the Gateway Pundit, and Jihad Watch. This designation, note well, places them on a par with the Chinese Communist Party’s *Global Times* and China Global Television Network. But hey, who needs news curated in

Beijing when you have *The Jacobin*, *Mother Jones*, and *The Nation* – all of them frankly socialist organs, and all of them recipients of green Wikipedia check marks?

The pattern is almost entirely predictable: Wikipedia awards the green check mark to CNN and MSNBC, while giving Fox News (for politics and science) an exclamation point in an orange triangle, signifying “marginally reliable.” The *New York Times* and *New York Daily News* are green-lit, while the *New York Post* is dismissed as “generally unreliable...especially with regard to politics.” Similarly, the *Washington Post* is “generally reliable,” while the *Washington Times* is only “marginally reliable.”

Hilariously, even the Southern Poverty Law Center, that shameless lefty smear machine, wins a green check-mark, and Media Matters for America, that unabashed fount of audacious Democratic Party spin, is deemed “marginally reliable.” Indeed, only a handful of extreme left-wing outlets – such as Occupy Democrats – are recognized as having an appreciable degree of bias.

Last year John Stossel, the veteran libertarian commentator, [lamented](#) at Front Page and in a [video](#) commentary that Wikipedia – to which he’d once happily donated, because it was founded on a “libertarian idea” – has long since made a hard left turn. In an interview, a longtime Wikipedia editor, Jonathan Weiss, told Stossel that while Wikipedia “does a great job on things like science and sports and older history,” its current events coverage is soaked with bias.

Weiss cited the Hunter Biden laptop story, which Wikipedia, parroting the mainstream media, dismissed as Russian disinformation and covered only in an article entitled “Biden-Ukraine conspiracy theory”; although most of the major green-check media ultimately acknowledged – grudgingly – the laptop’s legitimacy, Wikipedia continued to cling to its “conspiracy theory” line for some time before quietly dropping

its lies down the memory hole.

Pointing out Wikipedia's whitewashing of Communism and Antifa, Weiss showed how efficiently its editors safeguard such propaganda: after Weiss himself rewrote the Antifa page to describe the movement as "far-left," the edit was reversed almost immediately. Stossel, for his part, after noticing an entry that described the Trump administration as putting Mexican migrant children in "cages" at the southern border, added a few words explaining, truthfully, that the "cages" had been built under Obama; his edit, too, quickly disappeared. Several years earlier, Stossel had conducted a friendly on-camera interview with Wales, with whom he bonded on their shared libertarianism; but now, when Stossel pressed Wales in emails on Wikipedia's bias, Wales stopped replying to him.

The sheer audacity of it all is breathtaking. For years, the mainstream media lied about Trump-Russia collusion, thereby destroying Trump's presidency; later, they covered up the truth about the laptop, thereby ensuring Biden's election. In both cases, Wikipedia echoed the official falsehoods, branding any hint of dissent as right-wing agitprop and "conspiracy theories." But even now, with the facts on the table, the media that pushed those fictions are still identified by Wikipedia as "reliable" while the media that reported the facts are still categorized as untouchable. Even the *New York Post*, which broke the laptop story, remains in Wikipedia's doghouse.

If you step out of Wikipedia's worldwide headquarters in San Francisco and stroll down Market Street until you reach Market Square, you'll find yourself outside Twitter's main office. It's a short walk (through a neighborhood, incidentally, that increasingly resembles downtown Port-au-Prince), but it'll take you from one the world's worst sinkholes of leftist lies to an operation that, under Elon Musk, has been famously liberated from those lies. The latest of Musk's moves is particularly gratifying: in the past few days he's begun

putting labels on the accounts for media organizations like PBS, NPR, and BBC to indicate that – like Russia Today, the Xinhua News Agency, and Iran’s Press TV – they’re not journalistically independent but are, rather, intimately associated with national governments.

The BBC complained to Twitter, asserting that it “is, and always has been, independent” and, amusingly, maintaining that it’s funded not by the British government but by “the British public.” Slick, that: yes, British subjects pay for the Beeb, but only because *the British government forces them to*. (Last February, indeed, in a leaked private remark that former Tory leader Sir Iain Duncan Smith described as reflecting the Beeb’s “arrogance,” the BBC’s Director-General Tim Davie [bragged](#) about its success at forcing the proles to subsidize its left-wing agitprop.) On Wednesday, in response, Musk agreed to change the label to “publicly funded.” Better than nothing, I guess – but I can’t imagine why he decided to cut Auntie a break, especially after an epic Tuesday interview in which he tore to bits a BBC “journalist” who couldn’t back up his claim to have seen a rise in “hateful” content on Twitter since Musk’s takeover.

As for NPR, Twitter first described it as “state-affiliated”; then, when NPR protested, the wording was altered to “government-funded media” (which, to my ears, sounds even more damning). Kelly McBride, NPR’s Public Editor, responded with an angry [article](#) denying NPR’s reliance on federal funding. Tucker Carlson, who [applauded](#) Twitter’s new policy, shot down McBride’s claim by citing a statement on NPR’s own website that “[f]ederal funding is essential to NPR.”

Carlson reminded us that it was NPR that not only ignored Hunter Biden’s laptop but, “because they are fussy and self-righteous to their very core,” boasted about it. “‘We don’t want to waste our time on stories that are not really stories,’ said NPR’s managing editor Terence Samuel, ‘and we don’t want to waste listeners’ and readers’ time on stories

that are just pure distractions.’” On Wednesday, NPR announced that it would be leaving Twitter on the grounds that the new label challenged its “credibility.”

‘Which is precisely why the policy is such a positive step. These media deserve zero credibility. No, it’s no secret that the BBC, Canada’s CBC, and Australia’s ABC are state media – just as it’s no secret that Jesse Jackson called New York “Hymietown” in 1994. But imagine if every time Jackson was interviewed on TV the “Hymietown” remark was mentioned in his introduction. Think of the impact it would have! Well, the last thing the BBC, CBC, and ABC want is for their long-cultivated images of journalistic credibility, authority, objectivity, and independence to be dented by an ever-present reminder on their Twitter feeds that they’re no more independent from their national governments than, say, *Pravda* or *Izvestia* was under the Soviets.

So congratulations, Elon Musk, on a major shift in the direction of media transparency. Don’t forget to tag Denmark’s DR (funded by an annual TV license fee of \$308 per household), Sweden’s taxpayer-funded SVT, and Norway’s taxpayer-funded NRK (widely known as ARK, an acronym for “Labor Party Broadcasting”). May your rectitude prove to be catching. And, yes, Wikipedia, I’m looking at you.

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