

Hostility Toward Gretzky Is Both Undeserved and Embarrassing

By Conrad Black

The outburst of hostility toward Wayne Gretzky because he is a friend of President Donald Trump is one of the most embarrassing manifestations of national immaturity that I have witnessed in my more than 50 conscient years as a Canadian citizen.



Hockey great Wayne Gretzky smiles during an NBA basketball game between the Miami Heat and the Phoenix Suns in Miami on Nov. 14, 2022. AP Photo/Marta Lavandier

It is an elemental fact of civilized life that we develop all manner of relationships with all manner of people, and that these relationships may be based on a particular affinity and do not imply that the two parties are in overall agreement or

entirely approve of everything that each other does.

I am a cordial acquaintance of more than 25 years of Donald Trump, and I am relieved that he is back in the White House and is re-establishing the United States as a country that maintains its borders, has emancipated itself from fatuous and destructive wokeism and the green terror that our government is still trying to impose upon us, and is constructively filling the vacuum created by the evaporation of the moral and political authority of the United States under his predecessors. That does not make me a mindless and uncritical acolyte of the president.

The liberal American senator Eugene McCarthy, who unsuccessfully sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968 against Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, and Hubert Humphrey, sometimes went to baseball games with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and they avidly discussed the merits of players and management decisions through the game, though they could scarcely have agreed on anything else.

Those now trying to take Wayne Gretzky's [name off a highway](#) in Edmonton, or booing him in pubs and taverns when he appears on television, because he was invited to [attend Trump's inauguration](#) as president in January, are displaying ignorance.

Not only are a person's friends no one else's business, it is a distinction to be a friend or friendly acquaintance of anyone who is the lawfully elevated holder of so great an office as the presidency of the United States, a position that has been occupied by some of the greatest statesmen in the history of the world. It has been my privilege, and it is nothing less than a privilege, to have known 9 of the 11 U.S. presidents, starting with Lyndon Johnson. Some I did not consider to be particularly good presidents, but they all got to what [Mr. Disraeli called](#) "the top of the greasy pole" in the most economically and militarily powerful and culturally influential country in the world, and in every case each encounter I had with all of these men was an interesting experience for me.

Canada has been substantially brainwashed by its almost uniformly biased media in mindless lockstep with the national political media in the United States, as [Trumpophobia](#) has trashed the U.S. media's credibility and profitability and caused the pandemic of sackings of the most egregiously Trump-hating commentators in belated appeasement of American public opinion.

There are plenty of reasons to take legitimate issue with President Trump, including the garish aspects of his public personality. I know him personally to be a loyal friend, a brilliant raconteur, and a delightful and not at all overbearing companion—aspects of his personality that are not always on display to the public—and of course, everyone is entitled to their own likes and dislikes, especially in politics. But some Canadians might have taken note of the fact that Trump has twice stopped illegal immigration, which for many years had reached the point of an outright invasion of the United States by masses of destitute people. Among them were tens of thousands of dangerous violent criminals, and very few of them were emigrating to a new country where they sought citizenship and acceptance as loyal adherents to their new country.

Few Canadians noted that [in his first term](#), Trump ended unemployment without significant inflation, ended the provocations of North Korea, ended the Iranian sponsorship of Middle East terrorism, advanced significantly the cause of Middle East peace, and started to shape NATO back into a serious alliance of democracies, rather than a shabby collection of slackers who graciously accept the military guarantee of the United States without making a worthwhile contribution to the alliance—a category of shame in which Canada became the pre-eminent member.

Like everybody else, Donald Trump has his limitations, but in his career as a quality builder and a television star and as the only person in American history to be elected president without ever having sought or held a public office or a high military position, by translating celebrity and popular advocacy into the highest political office within the gift of

any electorate in the world, he achieved more before becoming president of the United States than any other holder of that office except those who contributed vitally to the founding of the country and its institutions (Washington, Jefferson, Madison) and those who victoriously commanded great armies in just wars (Grant, Eisenhower).

Despite facing numerous setbacks, Trump continued a campaign of large public rallies all around the country at great physical risk to himself. He was returned to office last November despite the opposition of 95 percent of the national political media and despite being outspent almost to the one by his opponent.

To be the friend of such a man, and to be praised by him [as Wayne Gretzky has](#), makes these brickbats and catcalls that have been inflicted on Gretzky by his fellow Canadians an insolence and a disgrace.

I happened to hear from President Trump recently, as he occasionally asks my opinion on some things, as he does thousands of other people, and the subject of Wayne Gretzky was raised because of the president's concern at the hostility being expressed towards him in Canada. I said that I had only met Gretzky a few times, but like all Canadians I had often seen him on television and in public, and I was certain that the overwhelming majority of Canadians knew that he was not only [one of the greatest sportsmen](#) in the history of our country and in the history of hockey, but a very intelligent and highly principled man and a person of outstanding quality in every respect. He heartily agreed with my very high opinion of Gretzky and acknowledged that he knew the nature of his current critics.

As [Sir Montagu Norman](#), a former governor of the Bank of England, famously said: "The dogs bark but the caravan passes on."

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