

ABC News suspends veteran reporter who called himself a socialist, criticized network in secret recording

Matthew Taylor
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ABC News suspended political reporter David Wright this week after a video secretly recorded by the right-wing Project Veritas was released in which the veteran journalist criticized the network's vacuous coverage of the Trump administration and described himself as a socialist.

The recordings were made in a New Hampshire bar earlier this month when Wright and ABC News producer Andy Fies engaged in a conversation with the Veritas operative, who falsely presented himself as a documentarian and did not secure their consent to record the exchange.

Though the aim of Project Veritas was clearly to portray ABC News as a hotbed of left-wing anti-Trumpism, the resulting video actually demonstrates the opposite, as Wright, who has worked for the network since 2000, criticized mainstream news for being driven by profits at the expense of the public interest.

In the edited video released on Project Veritas's YouTube channel, Wright can first be heard criticizing his network for avoiding serious political journalism in favor of the sensationalistic coverage that drives ratings.

"I feel terrible about it," he says. "The truth suffers. The voters are poorly informed. And people also have the opportunity to tune into whatever they want to hear. And so, it's like there's no upside in, or our bosses don't see an upside in doing the job we're supposed to do, which is to speak truth to power and hold people to account."

As the recording continues, Wright discusses how, like all of the supposedly liberal media, ABC fails to offer any substantive criticism of the president's

policies, instead focusing on the bogus Russian collusion investigations and Trump's daily provocative statements.

"We don't hold him to account. We also don't give him credit for the things he does do. Again, I think, some of that at least in the place that I work and the places like it, is that with Trump we're interested in three things. We're interested in the outrage of the day, the investigation, and of the palace intrigue of who's backstabbing whom. Beyond that, we don't really cover the guy."

Wright is correct. His employer, like the rest of the capitalist media, has no interest in criticizing the president for his attacks on immigrants and refugees, his attempts to slash social programs like Medicaid and food stamps, or his war crimes in Afghanistan, Syria, and elsewhere. To make such criticisms, even against a president they may be opposed to, would be to risk inflaming popular outrage and ultimately endanger their own class position.

Wright's use of the term "palace intrigue" is especially apt. Since Trump's election in 2016, the Democratic Party has committed itself to channeling opposition to the Trump administration along exactly these lines, promoting the idea that the president is a danger to "national security" because he is insufficiently aggressive towards Russia. In the process, they have strengthened the position of the military and intelligence agencies, encouraged the censorship of the internet, and diffused the mass protests that erupted at the outset of the Trump administration.

Later in the video Wright discusses the impossibility of conducting serious journalism when the news media

is controlled by large corporations. ABC News is a subsidiary of the billion-dollar Walt Disney Company media juggernaut.

"It became a profit center, a promotion center," Wright says. "Like now, you can't watch *Good Morning America* without there being a Disney princess or a Marvel Avenger appearing. It's all self-promotional. And promotion of the company, and also promotion of individuals within the company, as opposed to the kind of dedication to the story and a commitment to telling stories that we need to tell that are maybe hard to tell. The commercial imperative is incompatible with news."

Andy Fies, an ABC News producer also captured in the video, laid out how the networks avoid serious coverage of issues affecting working people.

"So you know real people talk about practical issues, when they're thinking about a candidate, 'I want to go back to the workforce,' or 'I can't afford childcare' or 'I need medical care for whatever.' Well, those things aren't TV-friendly things," Fies noted. "You know, we want to focus on impeachment, we want to focus on the big shit going on. And the things that help people make up their minds are little shit."

Wright and Fies go on to have an exchange about their superficial reporting on the 2020 Presidential campaign, comparing it to covering a horse race. In the end, Wright expresses his despair at the state of affairs that his network helped create, saying, "And we're in this awkward moment where, and created by this awkward moment, we have this fucking president. And we can't figure out how to challenge him."

When the Veritas "documentarian" asked Wright if he considered himself a democratic socialist, the reporter responded, "Oh, yeah, like more than that, I'd consider myself a socialist. Like, I think there should be national health insurance. I'm totally fine with reining in corporations. I think there are too many billionaires, and I think that there's a wealth gap that's a problem."

ABC's decision to suspend Wright for discussing his personal political views in a private conversation illegally recorded by a known right-wing provocateur is an expression of the growing fear among the ruling class that socialist ideas are starting to take hold among the masses.

On the part of the Republicans, this takes the form of President Trump's fascistic rants about combatting

socialism, in nearly every public appearance he makes. The Democratic Party's response is equally McCarthyite, with most of the national party leadership attempting to frighten their supporters into believing that if they nominate Sanders, he will be easily defeated by Trump in the general election and that the socialist label will sink the chances of down-ballot Democrats for re-election, despite national polling which indicates the opposite.



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