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Trump Supporters Floating Purchase of OAN Network as Fox Moves Leftward

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A dozen GOP heavyweight donors are being pitched on the idea of buying the tiny One American News Network (OANN) to offset the steady leftward drift of Fox News. [The Wall Street Journal first reported](#) that Republican National Committee (RNC) co-chairman Thomas Hicks is helping his family's investment manager Hicks Equity Partners propose the buyout to big Trump donors.

Rick Neuman, a Hicks partner, says it's all about business and nothing about politics: "Over the past 25 years we have been active media investors. Any interest in OANN is from a purely business viewpoint." Charles Herring, owner of OANN, said his family isn't really interested in being bought out. In an e-mail he said that OANN is "a reliable news source for a national audience [and] with the 2020 political season in full swing, expressed interest [in buying us] is on the rise. Yet our family didn't build our operations to sell it."

Doug Deason is a Dallas investor and major Trump donor who has been pitched the idea and has signed on to it, offering to assist in raising the estimated \$250 million it would take for Herring's family to change its mind. He sees both the financial and the political advantages: "The concern is that there's only Fox. The left [wing media] has so much more."

When OANN was launched on Independence Day 2013, Herring thought he could fill a niche that Fox was not serving well: "Fox News has done a great job serving the center-right and independent audiences ... [while] those who consider themselves liberal have a half-dozen or more choices." He said he planned to divorce political commentary from straight news, reporting the straight news steadily throughout the day as it developed but saving the political commentary for the evenings. Those evening talk shows include *The Daily Ledger*, hosted by Graham Ledger, and *The Tipping Point*, hosted by Liz Wheeler.

The evening commentary is unashamedly conservative and now reaches some 35 million homes. Herring has ordered his producers to promote pro-Trump stories while happily reporting on stories the left-wing media would prefer to spike. For example, during the 2016 presidential campaign, OANN ran a special entitled "Betrayal at Benghazi: The Cost of Hillary Clinton's Dereliction and Greed."

Fox has been steadily moving leftward since 2005 when Roger Ailes became chairman of the Fox Television News Corporation. He canceled *A Current Affair* and replaced it with a new Geraldo Rivera show, *Geraldo at Large*. When that showed bombed, Ailes kept Geraldo on, putting him into various



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other slots such as *The Five*.

With the lineup of left-wing commentators increasing in numbers (such as Juan Williams, Chris Wallace, Jessica Tarlov, and Donna Brazile), President Trump has been increasingly critical of Fox. Last summer he tweeted, “Watching Fake News CNN is better than Shepherd Smith [who suddenly departed Fox last October], the lowest rated show on FoxNews. Actually, whenever possible, I turn to OANN!”

In December Trump piled on, tweeting, “Both Commiecast MSNBC & Fake News CNN are watching their Ratings TANK. Fredo [Chris Cuomo] on CNN is dying. Don’t know why FoxNews wants to be more like them? They’ll all die together as other outlets take their place. Only pro Trump Fox shows do well. Rest are nothing. [BTW] how’s Shep doing?”

Another grievous offender is Juan Williams, who was hired out of college by the *Washington Post*, where he worked for 23 years as an editorial writer and op-ed columnist. Then he was picked up by NPR where he felt right at home ideologically for another nine years before they fired him. Almost immediately Fox offered him \$2 million for a three-year contract to bring his left-wing views over to Fox, where he has stayed ever since. Ailes thought he got himself a bargain: “Juan has been a staunch defender of liberal viewpoints since his tenure began in 1997. He’s an honest man whose freedom of speech is protected by Fox News on a daily basis.”

In 2014, Williams exercised his freedom of speech by telling the world what he really thought of Trump’s supporters on *Fox News Sunday*:

If you look at the core constituency — the people who are in, let’s say, Tea Party opposition, support of impeachment [of Obama] — there’s no diversity. It’s a white, older group of people. I would say if you just break it down as a matter of political analysis and say, “Who is this group?” It reminds me that the Republican Party has become almost a completely white party.... The core constituency — the people who want [Obama] impeached — they’re almost all white, and they’re all older and guess what? They’re all in the far-right wing of the Republican Party.

Donna Brazile serves as another example of just how far left Fox News has veered. The network hired the former chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) last March, ignoring her prominent role in managing every Democratic presidential campaign from Jimmy Carter through Al Gore.

Fox ignored her lying about providing questions to Democrat contenders before a primary debate in March 2016. At first she denied any part in providing those questions but when CNN reporter Roland Martin asked Clinton a question crafted by Brazile, she finally admitted that, yes, she had had a hand in developing those questions: “Sending those emails”, she said, “was a mistake I will forever regret.”

At the moment the buyout of OANN is in the early stages, with much of the purchase money still to be raised. Investors might be looking at it as an opportunity to buy a small conservative network just as the presidential campaign is heating up. On the other hand, if purchased, its influence could gain as Fox loses more of its own, helping the president gain another four years in the White House along the way.

That might be the best investment of all.

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.





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