



Stewart v. O'Reilly: The Bumble in the Air-Conditioned Auditorium

The highly-hyped [“Rumble in the Air-Conditioned Auditorium”](#) debate on October 6 between Fox News Channel personality Bill O'Reilly and Comedy Central funny man Jon Stewart proved a nearly perfect foil of O'Reilly.

Stewart demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the left-side of the political debate, together with all its false assumptions, but O'Reilly was unable to offer substantive rebuttals to nearly all of Stewart's points. Stewart's profanity-laced debate performance also brought a few laughs, especially when the 5'7" Stewart had a podium lift installed for the debate against the 6'4" O'Reilly.



Stewart [dubbed](#) the Republican/Fox News culture as “Bulls*** Mountain,” and pronounced O'Reilly the “Mayor of Bulls*** Mountain.” Stewart claimed that “We face a deficiency in our problem-solving mechanism. And the reason we face a difficulty in our problem-solving mechanism is that a good portion of this country has created an alternate universe.” Stewart explained of this segment of the Republican worldview that “They believe that a Kenyan, Muslim President has fundamentally changed the relationship between government and the people of this country.”

O'Reilly bizarrely responded with cheesy, hand-held placards, just like Glenn Beck used to do on Fox News.

And the “rumble” turned “bumble” quickly, as the conversation started on the question of PBS funding by the federal government. O'Reilly tried — and failed — to be funny by saying that NPR personality “Bill Moyers needs help, I understand that. But not economically.” Stewart [responded](#) by claiming that “The reason we invest in things like Public Television, is that it brings educational programs to communities that would not have them. It's one of the best investments we ever made as a country.” Stewart ridiculed the amount of deficit reduction elimination of PBS-television funding would accomplish: “Second of all, the investment in Public Television is \$130 million. \$130 million.” (The figure is [actually \\$430 million.](#))

O'Reilly inexplicably had no reply, even though PBS funding in an era of the Internet with millions of channels of programming on YouTube alone is at best redundant. And O'Reilly failed to point out that — while total PBS/NPR funding is tiny in terms of the total deficit — \$430 million per year in a deficit of \$1.1 trillion — a Congress without the courage to make an easy cut like PBS from the budget will not be able to reform the more expensive entitlement programs that have giant and powerful voting constituencies.

One example of how the “rumble” retained shallow and false leftist assumptions is the exchange on free



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markets and the housing/financial crisis. O'Reilly [said](#) correctly of the free market under the Obama administration that "You gotta unleash the machine." Stewart [replied](#) sarcastically, assuming the housing and financial crisis was created by free markets running wild, "Oh, 'cause what could go wrong?" Stewart continued: "Nobody talks about the flip-side of the free market, which is the bust. And we have to start understanding how they can no longer privatize their profits and socialize their losses." But O'Reilly had nothing to say about how the government had started the housing and financial bubble by suppressing interest rates and guaranteeing mortgages through its creations — government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. To the contrary, O'Reilly even agreed with the leftist idea that the federal government should be involved in subsidizing housing by guaranteeing low interest rates, at least for veterans.

In essence, the left-right debate was "lost" by the right because the conservative side had no one on the podium while the left occupied both sides.

Perhaps O'Reilly's poor response on government bailouts should not be surprising, as O'Reilly supported the TARP bailout of Wall Street banks with taxpayer dollars, and years ago [told](#) his O'Reilly Factor audience, "I've spoken to President Bush face-to-face about the TARP deal and he absolutely said financial ruin was avoided. I've got to go with that." O'Reilly's responses assumed a welfare state throughout the "debate."

O'Reilly tried to show that the left has its own hypocritical worldview by demonstrating the hypocrisy of the left with respect to the war against terrorism. Obama's supporters, who were highly critical of the Bush wars, now say that "some of the President's policies against terrorism have been very good, particularly the drones." O'Reilly [summed](#) up the hypocritical Obama supporters' view in a placard saying "Drones, yes. Waterboards, no." Stewart side-stepped the hypocrisy by noting he had long opposed both drones and waterboarding, but O'Reilly did not follow up noting that just about everyone else on the left had its own alternate reality. Instead, the Fox News personality intoned in favor of Obama's wars by stressing, "I like the missiles."

O'Reilly's one solid point of the evening was made on media bias. Former Fox News personality E.D. Hill — who moderated the debate and was even more silent than Jim Lehrer was in the first presidential debate — [asked](#) Stewart, "Is there a media bias, or is that bunk?"

Stewart [responded](#) that "I don't think NBC, ABC and CBS are activist organizations for liberal causes," and said that Fox News was a highly-biased over-reaction to what may be a very slight media bias. O'Reilly [responded](#):

The culture is left-wing. And how that plays out is — he's right — they're not marching in the newsroom with 'We love Che' signs. But it's who they hire, it's who gets promoted, it's what they put in front of you as far as story content, what stories they concentrate on, what stories they ignore. All of that plays in, and that's why Fox News is successful, because it gives voice to traditional conservatives at the same level as liberal voices.

Indeed, the major media companies all skew heavily leftward, with OpenSecrets.org revealing that political donations from media company employees being overwhelmingly Democratic at [Time-Warner](#), [ABC-Disney](#), [Comcast/NBC-Universal](#) and [CBS](#). Even employees of Fox News' parent corporation [News Corp](#) donated more to Democrats than Republicans, with donations to Obama (\$63,075) outpacing Romney donations (\$8,500) by a more than seven-to-one margin. And among donations to Republican candidates, the bulk of the donations were given to establishment and liberal Republican incumbents



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such as Eric Cantor (\$10,000) and Orrin Hatch (\$7,000) rather than Tea Party insurgents within the GOP.

The October 6 pay-per-view event had been promoted for \$4.95 through Roku, a platform to stream movies from the Internet using Netflix, which encountered technical difficulties throughout the live broadcast. Television personality Roger Ebert complained about the technical difficulties in a [tweet](#), noting that “I promote Stewart vs. O’Reilly on ROKU on FB and Twitter and can’t log in myself. Bad image for ROKU.” Half of the profits from the Internet broadcast were sent to 17 charities selected by the two participants.



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