

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS

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Fake News, True News

For the past week or so, the BBC News has been accused of modifying a speech made by President Donald Trump, which later materialised as a misrepresentation of Donald Trump. This has not been rescinded, and in a press briefing, Karoline Leavitt's has intensified a storm already swirling around the BBC's handling of footage from Donald Trump's 2021 Capitol Hill speech.

Her comments, published by the Telegraph, accused the broadcaster of using "selectively edited" material in its Panorama documentary to create a misleading impression of Trump urging direct violence. She branded the edit "purposefully dishonest" and argued that U.K. taxpayers were being forced to fund a "Leftist propaganda machine".

The controversy hinges on the BBC sewing together lines from different parts of Trump's speech into what looked like a single continuous statement. As a result, the edit omitted the portion where he called for a peaceful demonstration, to which the backlash has been significant. Consequently, this has led to Trump threatening a billion-dollar lawsuit, along with high-profile resignations, including Director-General Tim Davie and news chief Deborah Turness.

It has come to light that this is not an isolated incident but that an almost identical edit appeared on Newsnight in 2022. At the time, staff members dismissed their concerns. Mick Mulvaney, Trump's former chief of staff, highlighted live on air that the programme had spliced separate parts of the speech together, calling it an example of why it was "hard actually to get the facts".

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy referred to the issue as "very serious", and Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer emphasised the necessity for the BBC to "rectify their internal processes". The BBC has since apologised to Trump, acknowledging that the edit created a "mistaken impression". However, it rejected the legal basis for his threatened lawsuit and has ruled out compensation.

Legal experts note that Trump is unlikely to succeed in court, given expired limitations in the U.K. and challenges to proving reputational harm in the U.S., where the programme did not air. Even so, his team has pointed to previous settlements with American media outlets as evidence that litigation can yield results.

The incident exposes a wider concern: in an age saturated with political tension and fragmented media trust, even the appearance of editorial manipulation carries a heavy price. Public confidence depends on broadcasters maintaining rigorous standards, admitting errors swiftly, and ensuring factual accuracy above narrative convenience. "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbour." (Ephesians 4:25, NASB)
