

23 October 2006 - HAS FOX BECOME AN ATTACK DOG FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S CAMPAIGN TO SILENCE CRITICS?

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Television commentators compare 9/11 truth-seekers to terrorists

Madison, WI (PRWEB) October 23, 2006 --- Has the Fox television broadcasting network become an attack dog to silence critics of the Bush administration? A group of American citizens called Scholars for 9/11 Truth says yes. They charge that commentators on the Fox network, already known for its conservative bias, have maliciously compared the 9/11 scholars to terrorists and suggested that the FBI follow their members 24 hours a day, thereby contradicting the network's motto of being "fair and balanced".

"The Fox News Network has gone to war with Scholars for 9/11 Truth," founder and co-chair James Fetzer said. "FOX has used 'The O'Reilly Factor' and 'Hannity & Colmes' as attack dogs against 9/11 truth-seekers. These broadcasters charge that we have supplied 'material support' for terrorists, which paves the way for us to be classified as 'enemy combatants.' That means that our members can be arrested and held indefinitely with no charges simply for questioning the government. That smacks of unAmericanism."

"If it can happen to us, it can happen to anyone," Fetzer said. "The situation is fraught with ironies", he added. "The President himself has admitted that Saddam had nothing to do with 9/11. The FBI has acknowledged that it has 'no hard evidence' relating Osama to 9/11. But if neither Saddam nor Osama had anything to do with 9/11, then who was responsible? That's the question that we are trying to answer. Fox treats us as terrorists for wanting to know. There's nothing 'fair and balanced' about these attacks."

Fox News as Attack Dogs

Scholars for 9/11 Truth, a non-partisan organization of students, experts, and faculty, has more than 300 members, among them physicists, engineers, and pilots who dispute the government's account of 9/11. Supporters of the society include distinguished theologian David Ray Griffin, BYU physicist Steven Jones, former head of the U.S. "Star Wars" research program Bob Bowman, MIT engineer Jeff King, and former Bush administration chief economist Morgan Reynolds.

Fetzer charged that on October 12-13, Fox broadcasters launched "a prolonged and vindictive assault upon me, Kevin Barrett and all the members of the 9/11 truth movement." Rich Lowry, sitting in for the absent Sean Hannity, hosted a 'terrorism expert' who said that the 9/11 scholars were serving as "recruiting instruments" and providing terrorists with "material support." He found it stunning.

"This is a chillingly obvious tactic by Fox to lay the groundwork for having the 9/11 scholars and anyone labeled 'an unlawful enemy combatant,'" Fetzer said, "because that's one of the new technical definitions under The Military Commissions Act." Other critics of the government's account of 9/11, including syndicated talk show host Alex Jones, have been outraged by Fox's effort to identify 9/11 critics with terrorists. In his latest column, he observed that they are following the lead of the President himself, who suggested that 9/11 critics are "terrorist recruiters" in a recent speech.

Basic Civil Rights at Stake

Kurt Nimmo, a columnist for Counterpunch, an on-line journal of commentary and opinion, has been troubled by O'Reilly's proposal that James Fetzer and Kevin Barrett should be followed by the FBI. "But then, as we know, or as some of us know, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are now effectively dead," he writes. "Increasingly, it is a crime to question the government, especially in an academic setting, just the same as it was after the Nazis took over German."

"The problem," Barrett added, "is that our loyalty to the nation and to the Constitution overrides our loyalty to President Bush and his administration. Before being hired to teach, I signed an oath to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. If our research is well-founded, this administration is practicing terrorism against the American people. As Gore Vidal said, the enemy is within. It is our duty to defend this nation and its Constitution against a criminal administration."

The situation has been compounded by The New York Times' failure to report that, under the new "Military Commissions Act", American citizens may now be classified as "unlawful enemy combatants" at the whim of the President, Fetzer said. "I am shocked and dismayed that our nation's newspaper of record cannot even accurately report the most stunning subversion of the Constitution in our history by falsely asserting that citizens are not

covered by the law" ("President Signs New Rules To Prosecute Terror Suspects", October 18, 2006).

"Perhaps Sheryl Gay Stolberg didn't bother to read even the first few paragraphs of the Military Commissions Act," Fetzer observed, "but when she writes that it 'strips the federal courts of jurisdiction to hear petitions from non-citizens for writs of habeas corpus,' she fails to reflect the language of the act. There is no provision for exceptions for American citizens!" Writs of habeas corpus require that the government provide justification for holding a person in custody, a fundamental legal right that dates from the Magna Carta.

Polls Reflect Public Skepticism

Barrett and Fetzer have been repeatedly attacked on FOX programs, including both "O'Reilly" and "Hannity & Colmes", which came to a head on October 12-13, 2006. According to O'Reilly, for example, Barrett and Fetzer maintain that President Bush is responsible for the murder of 3,000 persons by orchestrating the events of 9/11, a charge for which they "have no evidence". In his response, Fetzer observed that there are hundreds of studies, documents, records, and photographs archived on www.911Scholars.org, which support the claim that the "official account" the government has advanced is false.

"Of course, O'Reilly gave an exaggerated version of our position. He would probably have been astonished to know that, after I appeared on The Jerry Springer Show about two months ago, he formulated a question that was clearly intended to elicit a minimal positive response. 'Did George Bush kill 3,000 of his fellow citizens on 9/11 for political gain?', Springer asked. 66% answered, 'Yes!'" Although this was not a scientific poll, it suggests that O'Reilly may not be up-to-speed about public perceptions of the events of 9/11.

In fact, according to a more recent New York Times/CBS poll, 53% of the American public thinks that the administration is hiding the truth from the American people and 28% believe it is lying. Only 16% believe that the administration has been telling the truth. "I'm really not surprised," said Fetzer, "considering that they have been withholding massive quantities of evidence in 12 categories from public inspection. They clearly have a lot to hide! All we want to know is how and why 3,000 of our fellow citizens died on 9/11."

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